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+ HEALTH and WELLNESS supplement

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ON THE **BLACK MAN'S BURDEN** (AND BLISS)

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**SPECIAL SECTION:** *Hope for Haiti*

THE **COURAGE** AND COMEBACK OF *Karlene Nation*

# THE REBIRTH OF COOL

**Grammy & Juno nominee Melanie Fiona elevates the sound of soul**

BLACK ENGINEERS | THE BEAUTY PAGES | SIX SPRING-LOADED STYLES

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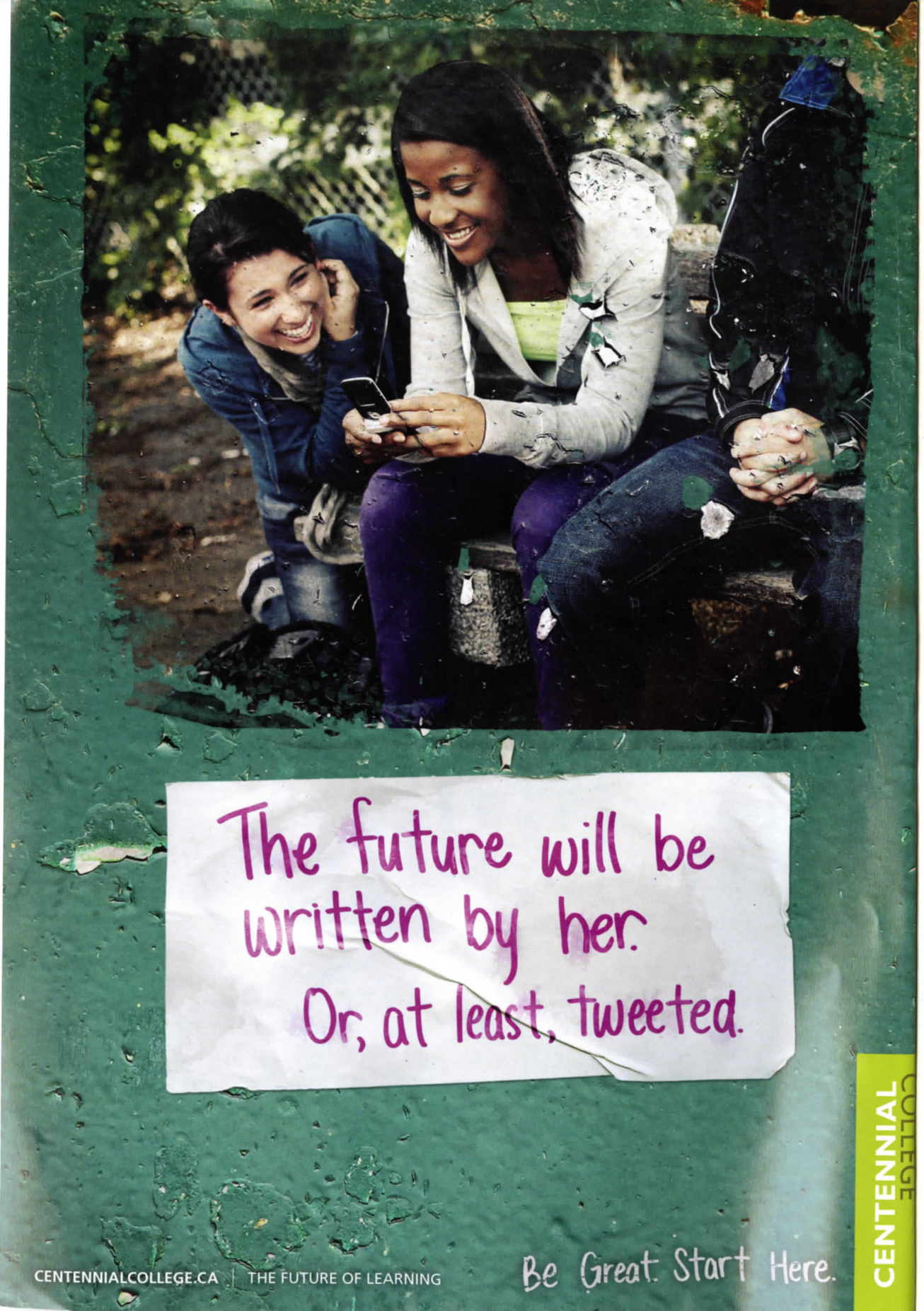
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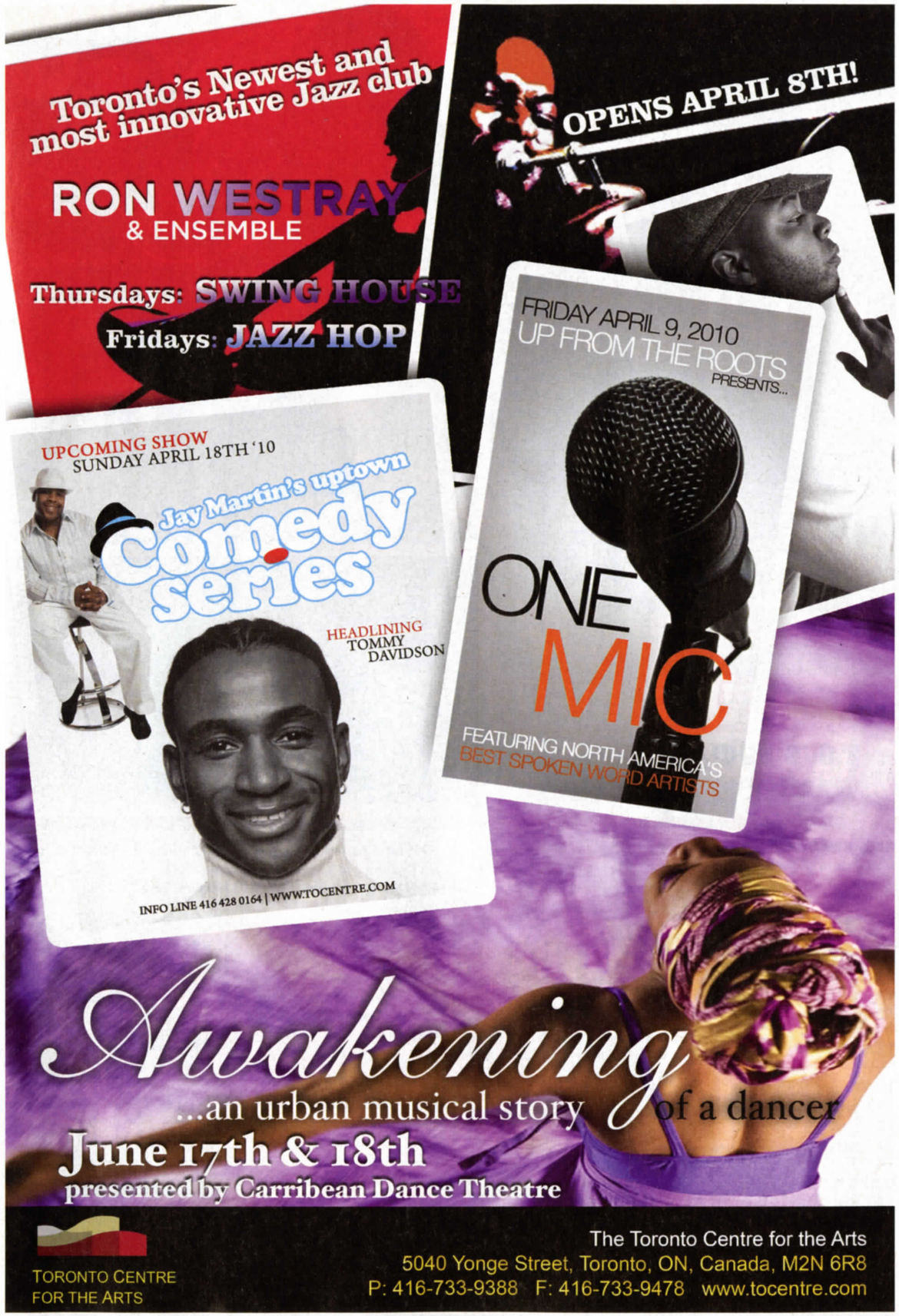
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# MELANIE FIONA

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DEAR SWAY MAGAZINE, I wanted to thank you for the beautiful article on my late husband Haydain Neale. *Sway* magazine landed at our front door one day along with some flowers. As I picked up the flowers I saw Haydain on the front cover of your winter issue titled *Black History Forever*. What an honour.

He would have loved to have been surrounded by such greats as Leslyn Lewis, Lincoln Alexander and deputy police chief Peter Sloly, to name a few. Our daughter and I sat by the kitchen table and read through the brilliant article that Erica Phillips wrote about his talent (comparing him to Sam Cook and Otis Redding). His thriving spirit and positive attitude was so comforting — reminding us that he wasn't just a talented writer, producer and creator of jacksoul, but also a family man and a role model. Thank you Erica Phillips for celebrating loved ones lost who have championed change in black history.

**— MICHAELA NEALE**

I found *Sway* at the newspaper stand in Union Station and then I saw it again at another newsstand in Commerce Court. As a black Canadian, it feels good to see other black Canadians grace front covers of magazines. I have been telling all my friends about *Sway* and I am looking forward to the next issue.

**— APRIL CROMWELL, TORONTO**

I was thrilled to accidentally come across a copy of the very impressive and informative *Sway* on the subway this afternoon. Wow! Congratulations on the winter 2010 edition.

**— JACK HARMER, TORONTO**

The latest issue of *Sway* is a beautiful collector's item. Many, many thanks. May all this positivity be spread throughout the world in 2010!

**—SUSAN DE ROSA, TORONTO**

I have never seen such a beautiful magazine outside the U.S. that talks to black communities. Wow, where have I been hiding? You just picked up a big fan, *Sway*. Keep up the awesome work you do; this country could use a little positive reinforcement and *Sway* does that. Wish others would follow your lead. Thanks.

**— DERRICK, MISSISSAUGA**

**DAUGHTER LOVES SWAY**

Our nine-year-old daughter, Zienna Taylor, has a love for many books and magazines, but she is very discerning in which ones she reads. Ever since she picked up a *Sway* magazine (the one with Keri Hilson on the cover) she must keep it by her bedside so she can read it daily. Zienna is an extra special child since she has Down Syndrome and Autism, and is basically non-verbal. We are not certain that Zienna reads and comprehends the words, but for her, it seems vitally important that she peruses every single word on each page. We felt it necessary to subscribe to *Sway* in order for her not to miss the latest issues, especially since it's delivered to our door. We want to continue to encourage an interest in reading material that speaks to her as a black Canadian girl. By the way, we love reading the magazine too, when we can pry it out of our daughter's hands. Thanks *Sway*, keep up the great work.

**—KIRK & LEZLYANN TAYLOR**

***We encourage our readers to send in photos to show us how they Sway.***

WE WANT YOUR FEEDBACK.
WRITE US AT: LETTERS@SWAYMAG.CA

## contributors

***Roxanne DeNobrega***

The Toronto-based makeup artist has been in the business of making people more beautiful for more than 15 years. Working regularly in New York and Los Angeles, her handiwork was recently seen in the feature film *Nurse. Fighter.Boy.* and can be viewed on roxannedenobrega.com. For this issue, we called on her to help the models shine in our beauty story. "I believe skin care is the first step to flawless makeup, so it was a pleasure," she says.

***Donovan Whyte***

This visionary fashion stylist (a.k.a. Deestylz) doesn't like to cede creative control. And it's his killer eye that superstars such as Nelly Furtado and Kelly Rowland count on, and that landed him on the *Toronto Star*'s 2009 Best Dressed List. For our spring fashion story, the industry pioneer decided to bring urban back, old school style. Join Whyte's fashionable following at deestylz.blogspot.com

***Miho Takaya***

The Toronto-based photojournalist has photographed and interviewed a number of notable arts and entertainment personalities for several publications and ad campaigns including the *Toronto Observer*, *My Mini Fash* and *Canadian Immigrant* magazine.

***Dan Hill***

The internationally-renowned Canadian author and singer-songwriter's classic hits include *Sometimes When We Touch*, *Can't We Try*, and *Never Thought (That I Could Love)*. His songs have been recorded by Celine Dion, Britney Spears, Rod Stewart, Michael Bolton, Tina Turner, George Benson, Reba, Sammy Kershaw and Alan Jackson, to name a few. Between his own hit singles, platinum albums, five Junos, a Grammy and ASCAP awards, the sales of Hill's recordings have exceeded $100-million. His new album, *Intimate*, was released on March 9.

PHOTOGRAPH TIM LEYES

editor's note

# Reach out for spring

CANADIAN WINTERS FALL into one of two categories — long and cold or *very* long and *very* cold. This year, we seem to have gotten off easy, and as the warm rays of spring hit our vitamin D starved bodies, many of us may feel a renewed sense of dedication toward investing in healthier and more holistic lifestyles. With this in mind, *Sway* brings to you our spring health supplement packed with ways to help Renew, Re-energize, and Reorganize throughout the season.

In our special health supplement, we connect with black doctors, nutritionists and alternative health specialists to find out specific ways that Black Canadians can improve individual health and wellness. With ailments such as high blood pressure, diabetes and obesity running rampant throughout our communities, the need for understanding issues related to black health has never been so critical. *Sway* is on the forefront of providing this much-needed information to our communities.

Stepping out of the doctor's office and onto the main stage, our cover story features budding superstar and Toronto native Melanie Fiona. Currently on tour with Alicia Keys and Robin Thicke, the Grammy- and Juno-nominated songstress took time out to speak with *Sway* about her long road to the top of the Billboard charts, the peaks and valleys of the industry, and life on the road as an entertainer. Although she didn't take home the Grammy (it went to some singer named Beyoncé), Fiona definitely takes top spot as *Sway*'s favourite new talent and we're sure there will be many award-winning performances in her future.

From the glamour of the main stage to the style of the small screen, *Sway* spent an afternoon in the home of *Restaurant Makeover* designer Robin Fraser, who gave us the inside scoop on how to reorganize any area into a well-designed, multifunctional, family-friendly living space.

Finally, *Sway* travelled to Montreal, the heart of Canada's Haitian community, to speak with the leaders, activists and organizers working to save lives and extend hope to the populace of the devastated Caribbean island nation. Their stories are both heartbreaking, inspiring and act as a continual reminder that each of us has a role to play in shaping lives both in Canada and around the globe.

This spring, let's seize the opportunity to add Reaching Out to our existing list of Rs, and remember that although charity may begin at home, it should never end there. (For info on how to donate to the Sway Scholarship Fund for Haitian refugees, see page 70.)

Take care and stay blessed,

JON SARPONG

***Del F. Cowie***

This Toronto music guru has been featured in various publications including *Vibe*, *XXL*, *URB* and *EYE WEEKLY*. In this issue he crosses the bridge with our covergirl, Canadian singer Melanie Fiona.

***Saada Branker***

Originally from Montreal, this freelance features writer has been living in Toronto since 1996. In this issue, Saada connects with Montreal's Haitian community and speaks to community leaders at the head of the relief effort.

*Sway*

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# Notable Quotables

"I have never walked out before a concert finished, but that was just terrible. I'll be suggesting my son tries to get a refund."

Dissatisfied Whitney Houston fan **Bernadette Latta** speaks about the first concert of the superstar singer's comeback tour

"She's pretty much retired me. She was definitely a blessing. She came at the right moment. I'm glad I believed in her, boy."

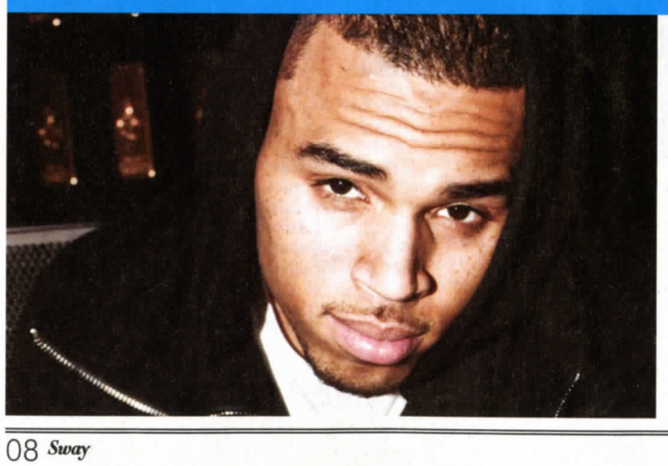
**Akon** thankful for being able to cash in on the huge success of his artist Lady Gaga

"I am so thankful for this nomination, and it shows me that Canada does recognize those who work hard and aim to make a name for themselves. As a black woman I have always strived to succeed, because I know that the odds are against me. This nomination shows that hard work, motivation, drive and ambition yield success. It is because of all those factors that I have been able to get to where I am today. The fact that I received a nomination for Reggae Recording of the Year is also significant, because I have spent most of my years living in Toronto, the most multicultural city in the world."

Singer **Kim Davis** on her 2010 Juno nomination

**"I've had a lot of time to think about what I have done. My failures have made me look at myself in a way I never wanted to before. It is now up to me to make amends. That starts by never repeating the mistakes I have made. It is up to me to start living a life of integrity."**

**Tiger Woods** apologizes to friends, family and staff during televised press conference



"I think people always deserve a second chance. Whatever (Tiger's) personal life is — and I think this goes for me and him — his personal life is *his* personal life. Nobody has the right to place judgment ... on somebody else's personal life when they're not directly involved with them. My hat is off to him. I support him."

Singer **Chris Brown** vocalizes his support for Tiger Woods



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# THICK SKIN

## How one self-proclaimed 'creative scientist' cured her hyperkeratosis

« BY GEENA LEE »

HAVING THICK SKIN is usually seen as a good thing. But for Jacqueline R. Telfer, it was a nightmare.

Around the age of six, Telfer started noticing that something was "wrong" with her skin when her hands, feet and parts of her face became much colder than other areas of her body. She was soon diagnosed with Hyper Palmo-plantar Keratosis Keratoderma, a disease that causes an excessive accumulation of keratin in the outer layers of the skin — making it thick, scaly and unsightly. Hyperkeratosis can occur anywhere on the body, but most commonly forms on the extremities. There are many types of hyperkeratosis, the majority of which are painless.

However, Telfer's case was quite severe. She says the constant pain and irritation almost drove her crazy because "it's like someone constantly tapping you on the shoulder ... never stopping." The visibly discoloured skin also made her self-conscious.

"I wore very long sleeves that would cover my arms, and I'd always wear turtlenecks or scarves," she says. "It really put a damper on daily life, like any illness would."

JACQUELINE R. TELFER

However, Telfer kept a positive attitude about her appearance and told herself she was beautiful. She even entered numerous beauty pageants and was awarded the first runner-up title in Proline's 2003 Miss Soft & Beautiful contest. "I didn't win those competitions the skin condition was obvious," she explains. "But it was something I did to make myself feel better."

At age 26, with her illness advanced to a near-cancerous stage and still interfering in her life, Telfer sought a way to ease her affliction. She tried various creams and ointments but, alas, not even petroleum jelly or topical steroids penetrated her thick skin. Telfer refused to take steroid pills because of the side effects and because they can actually make the problem worse. As a last resort, the self-proclaimed "creative scientist" concocted her own treatment, using a variety of products, along with some Jamaican-based home remedies.

"After much research and experimentation, I found a combination that worked. The cream helped to relax the skin, making it feel less irritable and dry. It even took off some of the layers, as it exfoliates as well as moisturizes."

After five years of using her invention, all evidence of Telfer's hyperkeratosis disappeared, except for minor scarring, and she achieved a clean bill of health from her doctor. Ecstatic that she found a way to cure herself of the disease, Telfer is eager to obtain a patent, share her findings with medical scientists and even cites an interest in connecting with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation as well as cancer research networks.

"I want to bring together a group of doctors and get funding, so we can turn it into a treatment. If you wait too long with this, the build-up of the skin can become cancerous," she says. "I'm hoping to get help with [the cream], so that people can get the help they need." ■

→ IF YOU SUFFER FROM THIS CONDITION, CONTACT JACQUELINE TELFER AT 416-565-4727 OR E-MAIL CEOJRT@GMAIL.COM

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PHOTOGRAPHY MIHO TAKAYA



# ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF SICKLE CELL

## A century after the disease was discovered, the focus is still on finding a cure

« BY TONYA FACEY »

THIS YEAR MARKS the 100th anniversary of the discovery of sickle cell disease (SCD) by Dr. James B. Herrick. In the century since SCD was first chronicled in medical journals, scientific research has produced treatments for those suffering from the blood disorder. However, for the millions of SCD patients around the globe, there's still no cure.

Sickle cell anemia is a genetic blood disorder that causes red blood cells to become hard and sickle-shaped, which makes it difficult for the blood cells to travel through blood vessels. Complications from this disorder can include severe pain, damage to vital organs and premature death.

The black community is most affected by SCD, as it is commonly found among people of African descent. It is also found among Middle Eastern, Mediterranean, Asian and Hispanic populations. SCD is passed onto children from parents who share the sickle cell trait, which is why it is important for adults to know whether or not they carry the trait and assess the risk of having a child. In Canada, one in 10 people are carriers.

Lanre Tunji-Ajayi, president and CEO of the Sickle Cell Awareness Group of Ontario (SCAGO), stresses the importance of not only knowing your status, but also your partner's, in order to alleviate the burden of SCD on future generations.

"Sickle cell disease is so deadly and painful that if you could prevent one child from being born with it, that would do a lot of good," she says.

Tunji-Ajayi is passionate about raising awareness of SCD because she watched her late brother suffer from the disorder for years. She now works within the community raising awareness, educating patients and raising funds for scholarships and grants.

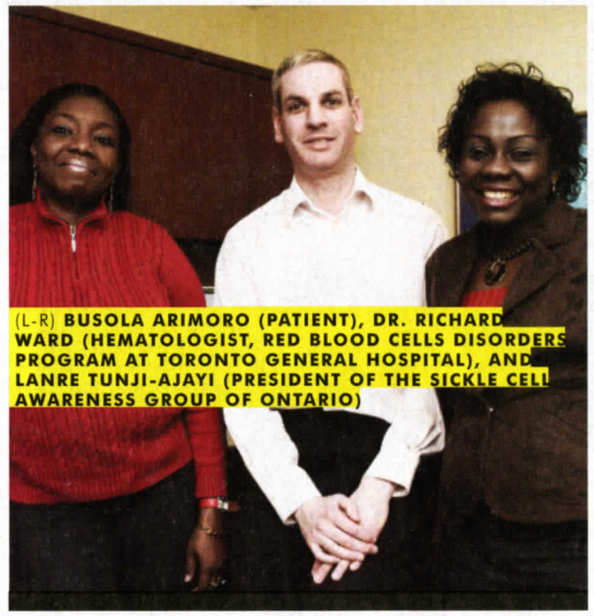
One of those community members is Busola Arimoro, who has been living with SCD for more than 30 years and finds herself in the hospital about once a month with extreme, widespread pain.

"Everywhere I have bone in my body, I have pain," she says. "When I have a crisis, it is from the top of my head to the bottoms of my feet."

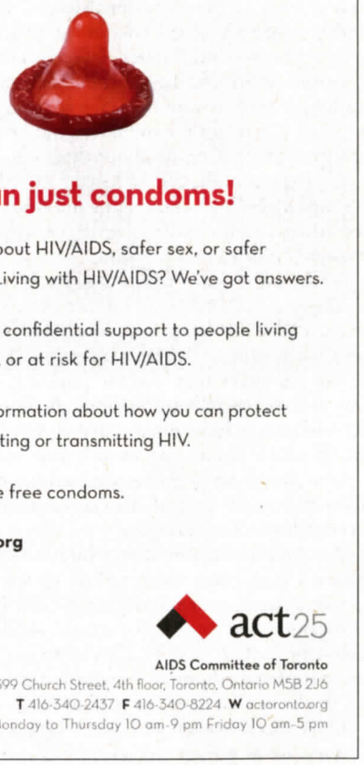
According Dr. Richard Ward, a hematologist with the Red Blood Cells Disorder Program at Toronto General Hospital, a viable cure for SCD has yet to be found. However, a bone marrow transplant is considered very close to a cure. The challenge with a bone marrow transplant is finding a match, particularly within the black community. Other treatment options include blood transfusions and the use of the drug hydroxyurea.

Researchers are also looking closely at genetics as a possibility for a cure. Gene therapy has proven promising in some laboratory studies, but still requires a lot of research before a viable treatment is developed.

Until there is a cure, the key to slowing the spread of SCD is to know whether or not you are a carrier and, if you are, to understand the risks involved. Fundraising is also critical for research. That's why the SCAGO hosts events such as the Hope Gala and Awards (May 15, 2010) to raise funds that will be directed toward increasing the focus on sickle cell research. ■


(L-R) BUSOLA ARIMORO (PATIENT), DR. RICHARD WARD (HEMATOLOGIST, RED BLOOD CELLS DISORDERS PROGRAM AT TORONTO GENERAL HOSPITAL), AND LANRE TUNJI-AJAYI (PRESIDENT OF THE SICKLE CELL AWARENESS GROUP OF ONTARIO)

→ TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE SICKLE CELL AWARENESS GROUP OF ONTARIO OR TO PURCHASE TICKETS TO THE HOPE GALA & AWARDS, VISIT SICKLECELLANEMIA.CA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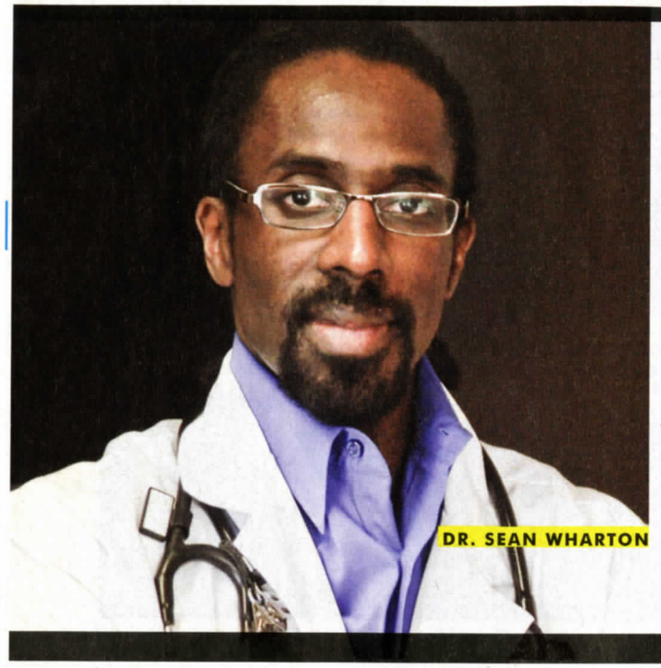


# Weighting to exhale

*Replacing the pressure to be skinny with a plan to be healthy*

« BY FELICIA CARTY »

SCIENCE CONFIRMS WHAT black men and women have known for centuries: Those curves, those hips and those butts are there for a reason.

Speaking candidly about weight issues and their effects on populations, Dr. Sean Wharton, MD, PharmD and Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, uses layman's terms to push his health message to the public. As medical director of the Weight Management Centre, an OHIP-funded wing of the Wharton Medical Clinic, Dr. Wharton's message is backed by half a decade of work dedicated to bariatric medical practice and research. It is a specialty spawned from Dr. Wharton's interest in the direct correlation between weight gain and health issues within the black community.

"It was crucial for me to understand how I could help to prevent this epidemic of metabolic disease in people from my own ethnic background," Dr. Wharton says, listing diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol and heart problems as culprits. According to him, these diseases of individuals have become symptoms of a societal problem.

In line with his aim to educate, Dr. Wharton says while there is biological truth behind the allure of an hourglass figure, problems occur when that Coca-Cola bottle shape that many black women boast, starts to become inverted.

"We are aware that visceral adiposity, the fat in the abdomen, is toxic to cells throughout the entire body, resulting in increased risk of heart disease, diabetes and high blood pressure," Dr. Wharton points out, armed with U.S. statistics. "Obesity is more prevalent in African American populations than any other. Eighty per cent of African American woman fall in the overweight to obese category."

The doctor explains that while Caucasian women should beware a body mass index (BMI) greater than 25, women of African descent, generally, can safely reach 30 (BMI is a statistical measure used to compare weight and height and serves as a diagnostic tool for health). This is because black women tend to have peripheral adiposity — weight captured in their buttocks and thighs — that does not tend to result in health issues.

"Once black women go higher, with a BMI of 35, 40, 50 or 60, they are at greater risk of multiple diseases," Dr. Wharton says. "Look at someone like Ella Fitzgerald. She died without any legs because of diabetes. Ella did not have a BMI of 30, it was well above."

Working out of the Hamilton-based centre, Dr. Wharton collaborates with a group of professional practitioners who seek not only to aid in weight loss, but in weight loss maintenance as well. They use a plethora of strategies with patients, including nutrition counselling, exercise, psychological profiling, use of medication, and at times, bariatric surgery. They also provide free lifestyle education classes, geared toward healthy living.

Dr. Wharton's patient roster is as ethnically diverse as Canada, often encompassing dietary practices far more complex than potatoes and steak. Fortunately, he finds patients from different backgrounds are generally capable of using resources to understand the caloric content of their own foods, "be it from curry roti, to chapatti, to butter chicken." The ethnic discrepancies, he claims, that successfully hinder healthcare tend not to walk through his door for help.

"It's been shown again and again in literature, there may be some degree of conscious or unconscious bias [within healthcare] against people of ethnic backgrounds," he says. "[Ethnic groups] know what it is we are supposed to be doing, but at times we bump into road blocks in a system that was not set up for us. North America is a white-dominated society, and as a result, sometimes there are challenges."

Most of these challenges, he says, stem from the socio-economic status held by many ethnic communities. Environmental factors, such as the lack of access to healthcare, poverty and lower levels of education, have left these groups in a viscous cycle that includes being vulnerable to healthcare issues and unable to manoeuver through the medical system to receive the appropriate care.

But what's the number one issue? "Being advocates of our own health," Dr. Wharton says. "We've paid our taxes. People should not be satisfied with poor treatment." So while Dr. Wharton may use American statistics as a point of reference, the border does not act as a line of symmetry in regards to healthcare — and that fundamental difference is the saving grace for Canadians. ■



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- Family history of diabetes
- High cholesterol or other fats in the blood.
- High blood pressure
- Diabetes during pregnancy, or giving birth to a baby weighing more than 8 pounds
- Being a member of a high-risk group e.g. people of Aboriginal, Hispanic, South Asian, Asian or African descent

## Take Steps Now

Small changes in what you eat and exercise can make a big difference in lowering risk. If you are overweight, losing 5% to10% of your body weight (10 to 20 pounds for a 200-pound person) and getting 30 - 60 minutes physical activity at least 5 days a week may reduce your risk. To get started, add one new healthy living strategy each week.

**Choose health.** Every day, eat a variety of healthy foods from every food group — whole grain breads and cereals, fruits, vegetables, lean meat, poultry and fish, and fat free (skim) or low fat dairy products.

**Put less on your plate.** Reduce all of your portions by a small amount and skip second helpings. This adds up to eating fewer calories for gradual weight loss.

**Eat regular meals.** Keep your body fueled and hydrated so hunger or thirst doesn't cause unplanned snacking or overeating at meals.

**Trim the fat.** Cook with less fat. Stir-fry, broil or bake with non-stick spray or broth. Compare food labels and choose products with less fat, especially saturated and trans fat.

**Eat slowly.** It takes 20 minutes for your stomach to signal your brain that you're full. Take the time to enjoy every bite and listen to your body's cues.

**Move each day.** Get started by getting off the bus a few stops early, take the stairs instead of the elevator to add a few more steps to each trip. Also try an exercise class or move to an exercise video or DVD.

Working to prevent diabetes is worth the effort! Small changes can have big payoffs in how you feel and in your quality of life.

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## Curried Cauliflower & Chickpea Stew

**Prep Time**: 10 min
**Total Time**: 30 min
**Makes**: 4 servings, 1 1/2 cups (375 mL) each

### What You Need!

1 Tbsp. canola oil
1/2 lb. (225 g) boneless skinless chicken breasts, cut into 1/2-inch pieces
3 cloves garlic, minced
4 1/2 tsp. minced gingerroot
2 tsp. curry powder
1 1/2 tsp. ground cumin
3 cups small cauliflower florets
1 can (28 fl oz/796 mL) no-salt-added diced tomatoes, undrained
1 can (14 fl oz/398 mL) no-salt-added chickpeas (garbanzo beans), rinsed
1/4 cup water
1/3 cup chopped cilantro
1/4 cup *Miracle Whip Calorie-Wise* Dressing

### Make It!

**HEAT** oil in large nonstick skillet on medium-high heat. Add chicken, onions and garlic; cook 3 min. or until chicken is browned, stirring occasionally. Stir in ginger, curry powder and cumin; cook and stir 1 min.

**ADD** next 4 ingredients; stir. Bring to boil; simmer on medium heat 10 min. or until chicken is done and cauliflower is tender, stirring occasionally.

**REMOVE** from heat. Stir in cilantro and dressing until well blended.

***Make Ahead:***
Stew can be made ahead of time, omitting the cilantro and dressing. Cool, then refrigerate up to 2 days. When ready to serve, cook on medium-low heat until heated through, stirring occasionally. Stir in cilantro and dressing.

**Nutrition Information (per serving)**
**1 1/2 cups (375 mL):**
CAL 310, FAT 8 g (sat 1.0 g), CHOL 35 mg, SODIUM 240 mg, CARBS 38 g, FIBRE 9 g, SUGARS 10 g, PROTEIN 22 g, VIT A 10%DV, VIT C 80%DV, CALCIUM 20%DV, IRON 45%DV

**Diabetes Food Choices:**
1 Carbohydrates + 2 Meat & Alternatives

# EXTENDING AN OLIVE BRANCH OF HOPE

## A specially designed support group is helping black women break the silence about breast cancer

« BY GEENA LEE »

ONE IN NINE Canadian women will be diagnosed with breast cancer in their lifetime. In 1999, Leila Springer became part of that statistic, joining the ranks of women fighting for their lives. While undergoing medical treatment, Springer searched for support groups that made her feel welcome and understood as a woman of colour.

"It was a long, hard journey," she says. "I wanted a support group that allowed me to express my faith and recognized me as a black woman whose needs may be different."

Unable to find such a group, Springer and fellow breast cancer survivor Winsome Johnson founded The Olive Branch of Hope (TOBOH) in 2001. The group serves women of colour who have been diagnosed with cancer by providing information, cultural resources and peer support during treatment and recovery. Participant Norma Evans says she found TOBOH very helpful during her battle with breast cancer.

"They gave me hope and lots of encouragement my faith was enhanced," she says. "We never spoke much about death, but about surviving. That's what I needed to remain positive."

Aside from providing support services, TOBOH has a mission to educate women of colour about breast cancer and risk. Through information seminars, health workshops and public discussion forums such as the Stop the Silence project, TOBOH is making progress. However, there is a challenge in maintaining an open dialogue about the disease. "Women of colour do not normally talk about their issues," Springer says. "We don't open up that easily. Some won't even say the word cancer."

Even though the emotional response to the disease among black women may be similar to that of their white counterparts, Springer says she believes the cultural response is different for black women because they have a "tendency to try and fix it ourselves, and some rely only on home remedies and prayer." But the delay in seeking medical attention can lead to fatal results, as women of African ancestry are more at risk of developing triple-negative breast cancer, a particularly aggressive form of the disease that is difficult to treat.

Johnson, who facilitates TOBOH's support group, and has been in remission for 18 years, admits she was one of the "silent ones."

"You don't want anyone to know you have breast cancer," she says. "But working with TOBOH and seeing how many women it has helped, has helped me to speak out more passionately. You don't have to die. There is life beyond breast cancer."

Recently elected president of The World Conference on Breast Cancer Foundation, Springer says she views her new role as an opportunity to voice the unique needs of women of colour in cancer research, treatment and support.

"Think of how Canada is so multicultural ... we have women from continental Africa, the Caribbean diaspora, Asia and South Asia," she says. "With all these coming together, we realize that something has to be done and we need to bring attention to it." ■

WINSOME JOHNSON & LEILA SPRINGER

→ FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL THE OLIVE BRANCH OF HOPE AT 416-256-3155 OR E-MAIL OLIVEBRANCH@THEOLIVEBRANCH.CA

### Reasons for Hope:

*New research is being spearheaded by African American surgeon Dr. Lisa Newman, who is tracing the origins of a rare form of breast cancer to Ghana. Her work could lead to clues in finding a cure for triple-negative breast cancer, which primarily afflicts black women.

*The Canadian Cancer Society is funding research into metronomic chemotherapy. With this type of chemotherapy, patients are given lower doses of anti-cancer drugs over prolonged periods of time. The aim is to improve the effectiveness of treatment while reducing side effects.

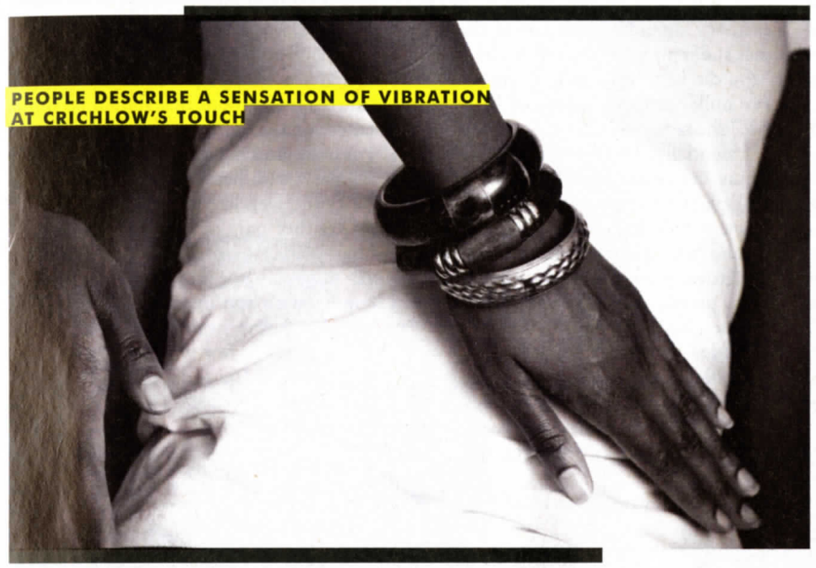




# A healing touch

## Image consultant and certified Reiki master **Mahalia Crichlow** speaks about the benefits of alternative treatments

« BY LEROY GRAHAM »



PEOPLE DESCRIBE A SENSATION OF VIBRATION AT CRICHLOW'S TOUCH

**Q: Many people are unfamiliar with alternative health options. What is Reiki and how can it help to improve individual health?**

**A:** Reiki is a form of energetic healing that originated in Japan in the 1920s. It is very popular in the East. It is a non-invasive treatment that uses a hands-on technique to alleviate pain and stress in the body while increasing energy levels.

**What are some ailments that Reiki can alleviate?**

Most of my clientele is made up of women who are dealing with emotional issues such as nervousness, anxiety, depression, low energy, etc. The treatment begins with a brief initial consultation regarding the patient's issues. It tries to answer questions such as how long the issues have existed, any triggers associated with the problem, and physical symptoms. After the consultation, I do a full body treatment that starts with a quick scan, focusing on the energy centres of the body, such as the heart or stomach, in the case of nervousness.

**Can you describe the actual treatment involved during a Reiki session?**

There are 12 hand positions for a Reiki treatment. We usually start with the head, especially with a whole body treatment, because any sort of emotional issue will cause the whole body to be off kilter. Then I place my hands on the face, crown of the head, ears, shoulders, throat and heart. As I place my hands on the body, people have described feeling a sensation of vibration, heat or the tension of the body moving down from the head to the feet.

**As the practitioner, do you feel anything during the treatment?**

When I first started the practice, I would sometimes feel what the patient was feeling. For instance, if the patient described a symptom where they had difficulty expressing themselves to others, during the session I would feel my throat tightening up. I've now learned to temper that. I will feel heat and vibration. Sometimes I will feel pain if a patient is really wound up and not dealing with things, but the pain leaves as soon as I release my hands.

**What type of changes do people experience after a Reiki session?**

I would say that people start noticing a difference in their general attitude toward life and just the way they look at things. Somebody who comes in overwhelmed and with an almost victim mentality will start to use more life affirming language and there is a total change in constitution. Almost everyone who takes the treatment reports an increase in energy levels. ■

→ THOSE INTERESTED IN A REIKI TREATMENT CAN CONTACT MAHALIA CRICHLOW AT 647-242-5287



PHOTOGRAPHY **DAWN GAWDIE**

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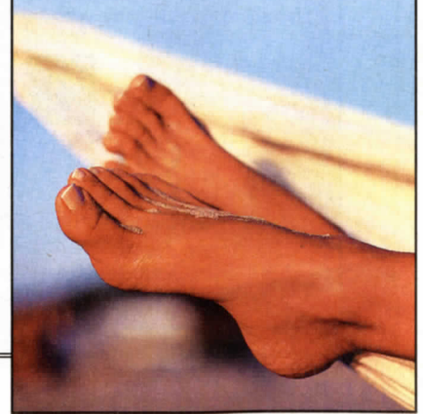
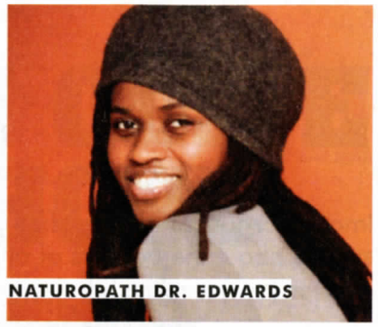


# BLACK IS ORGANIC

Dr. Trisha Edwards schools Sway on the uniqueness of black health

« BY STEPHANIE POLLARD »



NATUROPATH DR. EDWARDS

WHAT EXACTLY IS so different about black bodies? According to naturopathic doctor Trisha Edwards, black people thrive in the sun, don't do well with cooked food and a Big Mac will especially do the black body more harm than good.

"Biologically, we're structured differently and we require different treatment," says Dr. Edwards. Certified in naturopathy by Dr. Llaila Afrika, a prominent natural health consultant, Dr. Edwards says food that is natural, grown in the sun (high in chlorophyll) and uncooked acts like a battery for the black body.

Says Dr. Edwards: "If I were to eat a Big Mac versus, say, a Caucasian person, it would cause me more harm because of our melanin system. That Big Mac is going to stick to me more." In fact, it's not just the Big Mac black people should avoid. Dairy, cooked foods, starches (rice, especially) and even soy should be cast out of the black diet and replaced with holistic alternatives. "You can have hemp milk or you can have rice milk; yam and cassava are better than rice," she says.

Essentially, Dr. Edwards stresses that eating better foods will prevent diseases that plague the black community today. They include high blood pressure, diabetes and heart disease, to name just a few of the growing list of ailments. But why are black people so unaware of what is good for their bodies?

"A lot of black people haven't taken the time to research themselves," says Dr. Edwards. "If they did, they'd know what foods and what herbs are okay to eat. Biologically, we are different, yet we're not doing this."

For those who want to modify their diet, Dr. Edwards has a treatment plan founded on holistic foods. The plan includes a four-page chart. On the left side is a list of foods that should be eliminated; on the right are replacement foods. For example, Dr. Edwards suggests replacing meat with hemp simulated meat that looks and feels like the real thing.

Another part of Dr. Edwards's treatment plan is to connect with her patients via Skype to see how their bodies are coping with the changes. As for those who say eating healthy costs more, Dr. Edwards has a few wise words that you don't have to be a doctor to dish out: "Aren't you worth it? This is your body we're talking about." ■

→ TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT EATING AND LIVING HEALTHIER, CONTACT DR. TRISHA EDWARDS AT HER OFFICE: 560 DENNISON ST., MARKHAM, ON

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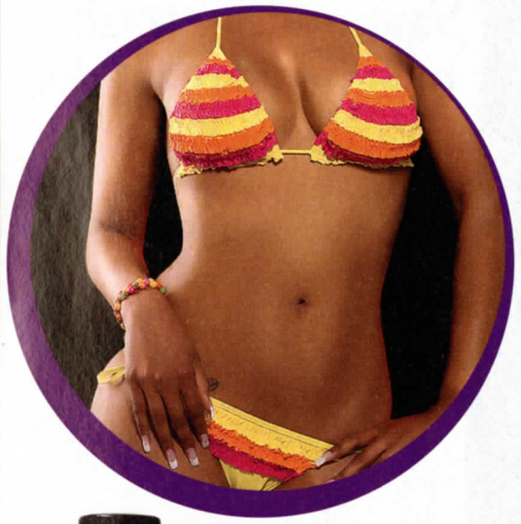

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# Ageless *beauties*

## Skin care experts, along with three lovely Sway readers, weigh in on how to retain your radiance — whatever your number

**▶ Your 40s are fabulous because:**
"To be this age is a blessing. I can hear my own voice, and I listen. And I don't worry as much about things."
*Sophia Brown Ramsay, 45*

**Sophia's ageless beauty secret:** "I try to be an optimist, it helps with creases. And I sleep in more now!"

**Advice from the derm:** "For women of this age, the majority of concerns relate to pigmentation disorders and effects of aging, especially the appearance of fine lines," says Dr. Mercy Alexis of Kingsway Dermatology & Cosmetic Centre in Toronto. "Fortunately for us, these signs of aging are not so significant and do occur extremely slowly. However, poor health habits, nutrition, skin care and genetic factors can accelerate the process." The good doctor's orders include proper nutrition, exercise, drinking plenty of water to hydrate the body, including skin, adequate rest and stress reduction. "They are all essential for prolonging youthfulness," she says.

**Sway suggests:** Estée Lauder Advanced Night Repair Synchronized Recovery Complex. Make the most of your beauty sleep with an intensely hydrating treatment. 30 ml, $63

**▶ Your 30s are thrilling because:**
"It's the perfect age. You're young and energetic enough to do the things you really want to, and old enough to make them happen."
*Tru Ferguson, 34*

PHOTOGRAPHY
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**INGRIE WILLIAMS**
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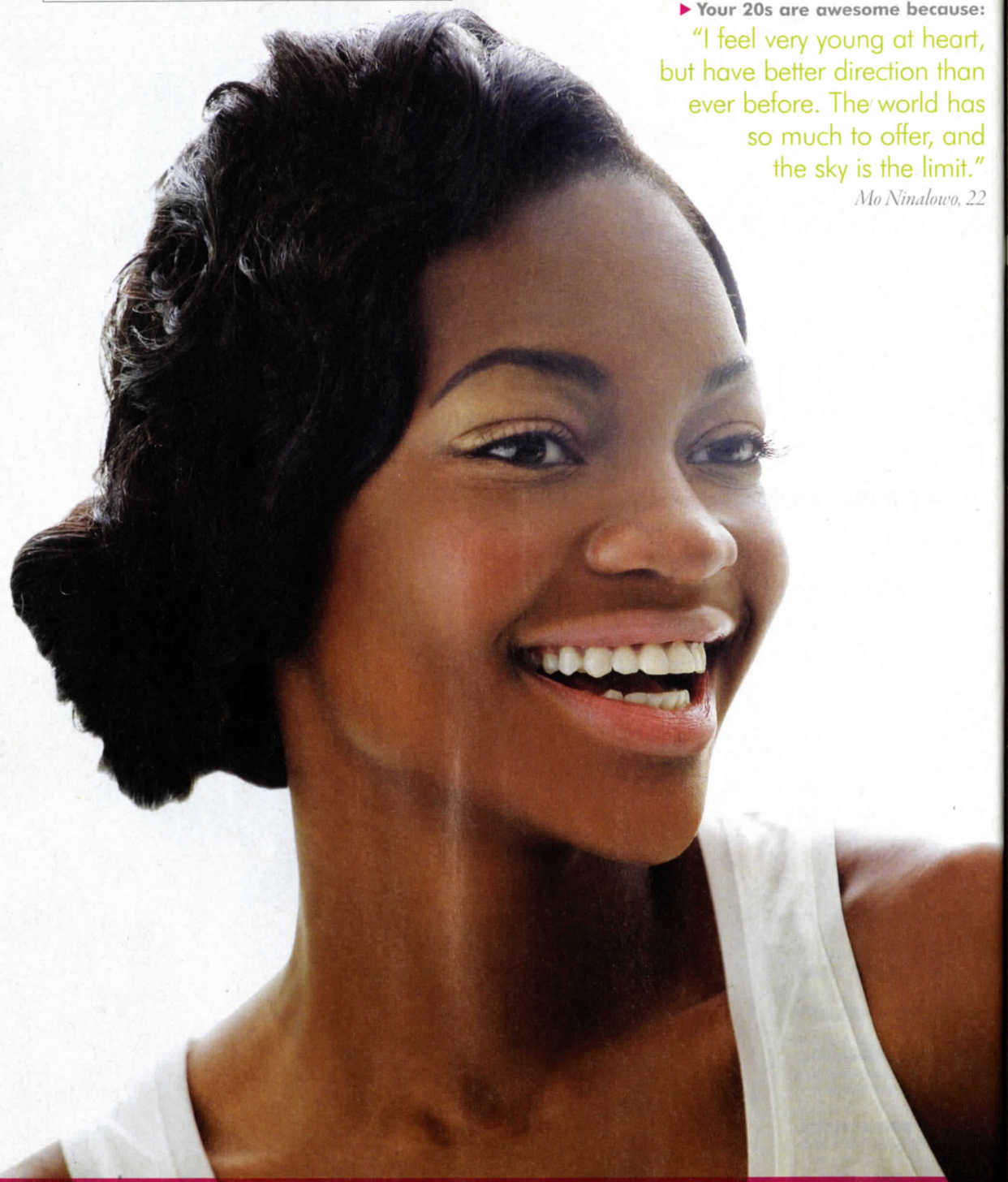
**ROXANNE DENOBREGA,**
for MAC Cosmetics
roxannedenobrega.com
HAIR
**SIMONE FINCH,**
for Chiggy's Touch Salon

**Tru's ageless beauty secret:** "I do a cleanse four times a year. After a body detox my skin literally glows, and my hair and nails grow faster. I do that and lots of laughing... stress ages you!"

**Advice from the derm:** "In their 30s, women may have concerns with skin tone," says Dr. Alexis. "Dark discolouration can range from black spots to brown-black patches that can involve large areas of the face, called melasma." A uniform glow comes from knowing which ingredients work. "Hydroquinone in different concentrations is the most commonly used product. Antioxidants such as vitamin C and E, as well as coffee berry and green tea polyphenols can also be helpful in reducing 'age spots'. But an anti-aging regimen starts with sun protection," she says.

**Sway suggests:** Clinique Even Better Dark Spot Corrector. It's loaded with antioxidants that single out dark spots without causing redness or dryness. 30 ml, $63



**▶ Your 20s are awesome because:**
"I feel very young at heart, but have better direction than ever before. The world has so much to offer, and the sky is the limit."
*Mo Ninalowo, 22*

**Mo's ageless beauty secret:** "I take Vitamin E and D supplements, drink lots of water and try not to wear makeup unless I have to. And healthy eating makes me less prone to breaking out."

**Advice from the derm:** "In your 20s, skin is prone to acne as the sex hormones stimulate increased oil production by activating the oil glands," says Dr. Alexis. "Healing can lead to increased pigmentation that fades with time, but picking the pimples can lead to black spots which can be disfiguring," she says. So keep hands off blemishes, and take up a routine suited to your skin type. "A gentle cleanser, such as Cetaphil or Spectrogel, for those with sensitive skin, while benzoyl peroxide, salicylic or glycolic acid products work for severely oily skin. Glycolic acid has the ability to exfoliate the surface and render skin smooth with improved tone," she says.

**Sway suggests:** Clarins Gentle Exfoliator Brightening Toner. No harsh particles here, just diligent fruit acids that lift dead skin cells while soothing skin. 125 ml, $34

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# **The glow of a youthful spirit** certainly comes from within, but a little external maintenance goes a long way

## In your 20s

**The scientist says:**
"Make sure you are using a daily moisturizer with broad-spectrum SPF of at least 15," says Dr. Rolanda Johnson, an Olay skin scientist with P&G Beauty. "It is a myth that women of colour can get away with not using sun protection. Although darker complexions do not show visible signs as rapidly as lighter skin, we can still experience the same damage at deeper layers. Of even more concern is when skin cancer is diagnosed in ethnic patients, it is usually at a more advanced stage with a higher mortality rate," she says.

**Her pick**
Olay Complete Defense SPF 30 Daily UV Moisturizer for Normal, Oily and Sensitive Skin.
75 ml, $19

## In your 30s

**The scientist says:**
"This is when you may experience a 'tipping point', when a visible change begins to occur due to loss of elasticity and cell turnover begins to become slightly more sluggish," says Dr. Johnson. "Look for ingredients like hyaluronic acid, which is great for helping dry skin absorb, and hold, moisture, and niacinamide (a form of vitamin A) which helps to decrease sebum production and even out skin tone," she says.

**Her pick**
Olay Regenerist Super-Structure Cream with SPF 25.
50 ml, $40

## In your 40s

**The scientist says:**
"Build on your skin regimen by caring for one of the most delicate and sensitive areas on your face: around your eyes. Visible dark circles can be attributed to a combination of factors, such as sun exposure, genetics, allergies, rubbing, stress or lack of sleep, dehydration and leftover makeup. Eye care products that contain peptides, caffeine and retinoids aid in skin rejuvenation, minimize puffiness, wrinkles and discolouration."

**Her pick**
Olay Professional Pro-X Eye Restoration Complex. 15 ml, $60

## MAKEUP ARTIST MUST-HAVES

"Always use a silicone-based primer. It provides an additional barrier between your skin and makeup," says Roxanne DeNobrega. "Opt for an oil-free formula, like Make Up For Ever HD Microperfecting Primer, 30 ml, $37." (Available exclusively at Sephora, 1-877-SEPHORA).

To keep skin luminous, it's time to invest in a weekly at-home treatment. "Using a mask that's packed with vitamins or exfoliants makes a noticeable difference," says DeNobrega, who likes the results of Clarins Gentle Refiner Exfoliating Cream.
50 ml, $34

An anti-aging serum, like Clarins Extra-Firming Tightening Lift Botanical Serum, 30 ml, $72, restores much-needed hydration and elasticity," says DeNobrega, "Apply it before your moisturizer, just after the face is cleansed."

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# She's got the look

Whether your preference is classically feminine, daring diva or all out edgy, three show-stopping singers (and the pros who style them) inspire us for spring

« BY REA MCNAMARA »

## The rebellious rocker

» **WHO'S THAT GIRL?** When **Eve** came to the Toronto International Film Fest for Drew Barrymore's *Whip It* premiere, the former "pitbull in a skirt" (who could ever forget that bleached blonde S-curl?) needed a local hairstylist to fix the lid done wrong in New York. Tami Turner of Head Turners Salon (headturnershairstyling.com) came to the rescue, creating a grown-out glamour girl take on the rocker faux-hawk for the red carpet.

» **HEADSTRONG WORDS** "She wanted edgy," says Turner, who now flies to New York to style Eve's hair for awards (*VH1's Hip-Hop Honours*) and TV appearances (*Late Night with Jimmy Fallon*). "She likes her hair sleek, stylish but classy and modern."

» **EASY AS 1-2-3** "The cut pretty much makes the style," says Turner. She weaved soft blond and brown bohyme extensions along a chain of braids down the middle of Eve's scalp, cutting the top crown waves for a punk edge. Gradual layers cascading down to her shoulders blended the extensions, while the tapered slick sides added a final Mohican touch.

» **LOOK-MAKERS** Turner shapes with Redken Rough Paste 12 Working Material, and maintains hold with KENRA Volume Spray Super Hold Finishing Spray 25.

## The glam girl

» **BAREFOOT DIVA** 3.2-billion TV viewers watched **Measha Brueggergosman** sing at the opening ceremonies of the Vancouver 2010 Olympics, so you know the Canadian soprano gave full-on glam with her mile-high 'fro and gold lame DSquared2 evening gown. "She's a person that says, 'You go big or you go home,'" explains Brueggergosman's hair stylist Maria Bertrand, who takes full responsibility for blowing out hair higher than the slopes at Whistler.

» **HEADSTRONG WORDS** "We were trying to encourage women to go with their natural look," says the owner of Kasnique Hair Design Studio (kasnique.ca). "We definitely want people to feel comfortable with being natural and powerful."

» **EASY AS 1-2-3** It begins with a shampoo and deep conditioner to get the hair's natural texture, followed by a leave-in conditioner. Bertrand fuses the hair with a diffuser. "Once it's dried, use a brush to pull out from the roots to get the hair bigger, but without pulling the brush all the way through to interrupt the curls," she says. A serum sets the curl and adds camera-ready sheen.

» **LOOK-MAKERS** Brueggergosman is one of the lucky few to use Kasnique Genius, a natural-based hair product that Bertrand is currently developing (look for it in early 2011).

## The sultry siren

PHOTO BY MAX LANDER

» **OLD SKOOL LOVE** In the 2009 Charles Officer-directed short ***Divine Brown*** *at the Rex*, the local R&B/soul star revisits her jazz cat roots at the infamous Rex Hotel (check it out at www.citysonic.tv). Channelling retro classiness (how else would you accessorize with a vintage Rolls Royce and string of pearls?) with a smooth shoulder-length wave, Maria Bertrand — yup, she's Brown's hairstylist too — assures her client is "still a natural girl underneath" who does extensions for this soft look.

» **HEADSTRONG WORDS** "Bigger is always better," says Bertrand. "Lots of body and movement is really important for a glam look, even for a natural glam look. It's important that the braids aren't tight though, because that does cause damage."

» **EASY AS 1-2-3** A good shampoo and conditioner is followed by a 20-minute deep condition. Ends are trimmed, and Bertrand plaits Brown's hair into 'D' shaped cornrows. The extensions are "100 per cent human hair, because it's gentler on her hair." Then, she says, it's really good to use a round brush to achieve that sultry wave.

» **LOOK-MAKERS** Deep conditions and regular trims are necessary for strengthening Divine's natural hair, which is why Bertrand swears by jojoba oil.





# VIEWS of HUES

What goes with this spring's body-con notice-me prints? Fabulous hair colour, of course. Our experts share their notes on what sings spring.

« BY REA MCNAMARA »

» **GO HEALTHY** Not everyone has the knowhow to sew silk lining into winter toques. (Didn't you know that woolly head gear can cause breakage just by rubbing against your delicate kink?) So Hair2Inc.'s Adrian Carew recommends that you approach spring as the great preparation for summer. "We usually concentrate on promoting healthy colour, so we're doing a lot of tone-on-tone colour," says Carew, who's often on backstage beauty detail for the runway shows of local fashion line Greta Constantine. "Try a base colour of a nice red-brown, and then add a different tone on a different section — coppers and golds are the types of colours we're promoting." Think luxe all-over colour: richer reds, deeper browns, glistening blacks.

» **PLAY WITH CONTRAST** What works with sleek, spare and sexy urban hairstyling? Peek-a-boo highlights, advises Nakisha Straker of UrbanTextures Salons. This season's blunt razor cuts and old school fades call for contrasting bright colours to emphasis the hair's natural movement. "It's all about the cut," says Straker, who happens to be Chris Bosh's hairstylist. "You want to phrase the colours with the way the hair moves." Not feeling too bright? Straker suggests re-mixing the contrast. Instead of going all-out red, she recommends the subtlety of two shades under: a gold and orange, or even a gold and brown.

## MAKE WAVES WITH COLOURING TIPS FOR CURLY HAIR

**1. AVOID PERMANENT** Go for a conditioning semi-permanent colour instead — permanent's high concentration of chemicals tends to strip the hair's natural oils, which is a major strike against a fragile hair type that veers on the dry side.

**2. FIND A CURL-FRIENDLY COLOURIST** "I would suggest you go to a person who really knows how to colour," says Carew. A colourist that's versed on your specific curl profile will be better able to create a colour map that works with your curly locks.

**3. TRY HIGHLIGHTS** "Curly hair has so many crevices that it tends to look dull," says Straker, on the need for colour variation to shake-off solid spirals. "This season we're trying to get a lot of colour into curly textures — a red or a nice chocolate brown to intensify the look."

**4. SAY NO TO FOIL** If your colourist suggests foiling for highlights, decline. Since basic foil strips are difficult to position against the root, the colour may bleed and, worst-case scenario, look unnatural. Request highlights a la *balayage*, meaning "to sweep" en Français, a free-form hand-painting technique that let's your colourist pick and choose ringlets to colour that emphasizes your unique wave, curl or kink.

**5. TREAT, TREAT, TREAT** It goes without saying that using treatments — protein moisture-based conditioning products — on a regular basis will not only help your hair hold colour longer, but make it look shinier and brighter.

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Made-to-measure

# HAIRCARE

Trust a professional when it comes to retexturizing treatments

« BY REA MCNAMARA »

"THERE AREN'T MANY places in Toronto that provide a sound and biochemically careful relaxer service," says Christos Cox, owner of UrbanTextures Salons. "We promise bouncy, behaving and, more importantly, healthy hair." The hair specialist knows a thing or two about taming your mane. Below is essential advice for every season.

### READING THE LABEL

According to Cox, manufacturer instructions (important label info outlining treatment times) are, more often than not, ignored by hairdressers. "Most of the hairdressers have never read the bottle that the relaxer comes in; they only do what they're told by someone else. Some even assume that the product can be left on the hair for 20 to 30 minutes, and in some cases, 40 to 45 minutes! Any retexturizing isn't allowed to sit on hair that long — no matter how coarse your hair is."

### CHEMICALLY-SPEAKING

The common chemical in relaxing services is hydroxide. Yup, the same chemical found in hair depilatories like Nair. "Hair relaxing should be considered as serious a service to a hairstylist as open-heart surgery is to a surgeon," says Cox. "If not done properly, not only will your hair fall out, but you can end up with permanent baldness." For clients with a sensitive scalp that's prone to burning during the relaxing process, UrbanTextures recommends using milder-strength products, and, according to Cox, any professional salon will know the difference.

### DAMAGE

"Elasticity is the power of hair to stretch when you comb and thermo-style it," explains Cox. "But it has less of that ability when it's over-relaxed; that's why it's all over your bathroom floor, on your shoulders, in your husband's mouth." So look for signs of shedding hair, a clear signal to immediately book a weekly moisturizing treatment.

### TRUST A TRAINED SPECIALIST

Cox advises to be wary of stylists quick to make a buck on "overlapping relaxers" or have a poor understanding of the "line of demarcation" that separates the old, chemically-treated hair from the new growth. (It goes without saying that you should only apply relaxer to new growth.) "Be careful about doing double processes," says Cox. "Do the relaxer first, then two to four weeks later, follow up with hair colouring. This will give your hair the necessary time it needs to return to its natural state in between treatments." ■

### The MIZANI low-down

At UrbanTextures Salons, Cox swears by Mizani's Curl-Care Complex System. The anti-breakage technology with vitamin E and jojoba oil infuses moisture deep into the hair sealing the cuticles. In addition to Mizani, Cox also likes the Affirm and FiberGuard systems by Avlon, developed by Dr. Ali Sayed, one of the world's top chemists in the field of haircare science. Says Cox: "The most exciting research in multi-textured hair is taking place right now in L'Oreal laboratories."

### Post-treatment DOS & DONT'S

**DO** towel dry your hair before conditioning or you will dilute the power of your moisturizer.

**DON'T** sleep on cotton — use a satin pillowcase or tie your hair with a silk scarf.

**DO** use products with thermal protection every time you use heat on your hair.

**DON'T** flat iron your hair every day. Plus, you shouldn't flat iron a section more than three times in between shampoos.

# CELEB SHADES

## Do your 'do like the stars do

**MO'NIQUE**
**Nakisha Straker, Urban Textures Salons:** "Even though it's very natural and even conservative, Mo'Nique has a lot of colour in her hair through the blending of highlights."

**RIHANNA**
**Nakisha Straker:** "Rihanna's definitely coming out of her shell in that she's using shades that truly compliment her skin colour — lots of golds and browns that create movement and look fun."

**QUEEN LATIFAH**
**Tami Turner, Head Turners Salon:** "Queen Latifah sets a precedent for the tone of blond a black woman can go for."

**MARY J. BLIGE**
**Tami Turner:** "Mary J. Blige finally got her blond right."
**Maria Bertrand, Kasnique Hair Design Studio:** "It's not natural, but I love how Mary J's blonds are never brassy."


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# *Fresh* face forward

Meet **Jacquie Hutchinson**, the jet-setting national product trainer and makeup artist for Revlon Canada. With 14 years experience, who better to give you the scoop on the prettiest looks for spring?

**1. Skin:** "For a flawless complexion, new PhotoReady Makeup, $19, will warm and even out your skin tone without looking ashy. This formula is wonderfully buildable. You can add another layer and it won't ever look cakey. To set makeup and give skin an amazing glow, finish with a light buffing of my fave: ColourStay Mineral Finishing Powder in Suntan Matte, $19."

**Eyes:** "I love a smoky eye, but not just in black! Try a bronze, like Revlon's Luxurious Colour Eyeshadow Perle in Shimmer Sienna, $9. The heavily pigmented formula has intensity and iridescence, whereas matte shades tend to look flat. This metallic pops on dark skin."

**2. Lips:** "Our Super Lustrous Lip Gloss with SPF 15 in Pink Pursuit, $13, is the perfect cool, soft shade. It's more pearly than most glosses, and has built-in protection."

**3. Nails:** "There are gorgeous shades this season, like Bubble Gum, $6 (in stores in May), that are so wearable and more appropriate for work than previous years. Back in the day only young girls could wear these colours, but now they're absolutely for any age. If you love it, wear it!"

**Beauty bonus:** Peach Smoothie, Cotton Candy, yum! Once dry, each shade in Revlon's Limited Edition Scents of Summer Nail Enamel collection smells like its name. Sound crazy? We thought so too, but we tested it and we smell success.


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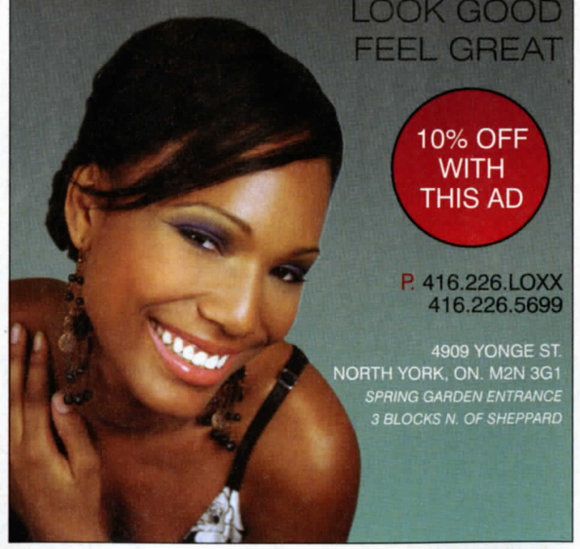

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# IN LIVING COLOUR

## EDITOR'S PICKS: MAQUILLAGE MUSTS FOR SPRING

Admittedly, this palette might seem crazy-bright, but a sliver of the lime powder along upper lash lines is noticeable without being overwhelming. As for the sparkly plum, it's dark enough to be used like any neutral.

**Lise Watier Eye Duo Vintage Moderne in Modern Twist, $25.**

Greet the warm weather with a coral-coloured mouth. The handy pen applicator allows you to easily fill in and define lips. You can also customize the results from sheer to opaque.

**Lise Watier Hydra Shine Lip Stain in Pêche, $20.**

A 2-in-1 is always a winner. Stripes of blush and bronzer combine to give a healthy-looking flush and touch of glow all at once — and in a pretty package, too.

**Estée Lauder Bronze Goddess Exotic Bronzing Blush, $45.**

Pedi season is almost here, and this deep amethyst polish with swirls of metallic is an ideal shade for your toe tips debut.

**Estée Lauder Pure Color Nail Lacquer in Wild Orchid, $25.**

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# Right on time

*The hour has come for a wardrobe spring loaded with crisp neutrals, vibrant colours and a more-the-merrier take on accessories*

PHOTOGRAPHY
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Ingrie Williams

STYLIST
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MAKEUP
Kim 'Blackspanese' Goodman

HAIR
Adrian Carew, Hair2Inc.

SPECIAL THANKS
Elmer Olsen Model Management and Ford Models



SWAGGER | fashion

## Orange crush

A luscious satin belt in a juicy shade is the perfect adornment to a base of stark white, and a dash of black. Yes, it's not nearly warm enough to break out the short-shorts yet — but for a night out where you're only exposed to the elements for a moment, they'll do just fine. Substitute slim white pants if you're not inclined to suffer in the name of fashion. Either way, don't forget to add elements with visual interest. Here, sparkling silver jewels and a stack of timepieces support the simplified palette.

White stretch camisole, $7, H&M, hm.com. Black vest, $40, Zara, zara.com. White shorts, $30, H&M. Orange bow belt, $36, BCBG, bcbg.com. Silver knotted necklace, $40, shoulder duster earrings, and wide chain link bracelet, $40, all Fashionably Yours, fashionablyyours.ca. Watches, from left, white rubber strap with Swarovski crystals, $115, Tommy Hilfiger, and white leather strap, $235, Lacoste.

SWAYMAG.CA/SUBSCRIBE

## Citrus twist

Shoes make the man. Zesty suede kicks are the final note on a look that strikes the right balance between professional and playful. The fitted two-button blazer and pressed crease pants say 'you can take me seriously,' while the multi-hued psychedelic print shirt speaks volumes about a fun-lovin' personality.

Linen blazer, $1350, floral print shirt, $375 and linen pants, $350, all Etro, at Holt Renfrew, holtrenfrew.com. Suede sneakers, $100, and plastic sports watch, $80, both Adidas, adidas.com.

## Fruit punch

How to make a bright look sharp? Pair it with a seasonal star, like the boyfriend blazer. The must-have topper for spring has been given a nautical overhaul. It comes double-breasted, in shades as light as freshly whipped cream and complete with ornate metal buttons. Such a powerful piece demands strong allies, like a tank top in attention-grabbing magenta, slouchy-yet-slim pants and sassy blue suede shoes.

Military style blazer, $229, slim pant, $139 and silk tie, $79, all from Club Monaco, clubmonaco.com. Pink tank, $10, and white tank, $7, both H&M, hm.com. Silver hoop earrings, $15, Fashionably Yours, fashionablyyours.ca. 'Love' ring, $15, and chain link necklace with black plastic sunglasses pendant, $12, both Aldo, aldoshoes.com. Pink sports watch, $80, Adidas, adidas.com. Stainless steel and white plastic watch, $295, Lacoste. Peep toe high heels, $99, Zara, zara.com.

## Boy in blue

Proof that dress shirts and ties aren't only for suits. Think of them as a way to put a slick, stylish accent on any outfit — even a casual one with sweat pants as a key player. It helps that the shirt is patterned and the tie is un-traditional (read: square tip, not silk). And do we even have to point out that this combo only works because the shirt's un-tucked? Didn't think so.

Wool jacket, $1195, Prada, from Holt Renfrew, holtrenfrew.com. Checkered shirt, $79.50, and knit tie, $98, both Brooks Brothers, Royal Bank Plaza, 416-368-0162, brooksbrothers.com. Adjustable sweat pants, $79, Club Monaco, clubmonaco.com. Suede sneakers, $100, Adidas, adidas.com. Stainless steel chronograph watch, $595, ESQ by Movado.

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## Purple reign

Sought-after style is all about the mix. It's where Saturday night's little black dress meets Sunday afternoon's eggplant sporty jacket, and they get along famously. An insatiable appetite for add-ons scores points too. Remember that old rule about taking off one piece of jewellery before you head out? Forget it, and pile on another watch (or ring, or necklace or a pair of glasses) instead. Today's rule: more is more stylish.

Zip-up jacket, $59, Adidas, adidas.com. Black cocktail dress, $555, Marc by Marc Jacobs, at Holt Renfrew, holtrenfrew.com. Suede platform heels, $293, BCBG, bcbg.com. Zipper necklaces, $45 and $150, and gold-toned hoops, $15, all Fashionably Yours, fashionablyyours.ca. Rings, $15 each, Aldo, aldoshoes.com. Watches, from left to right, white dial with black silicone strap, $115, black silicone strap, $125, and black rubber strap with Swarovski crystals, $115, all Tommy Hilfiger.





## Pretty in pink

Wearing the most traditionally feminine colour (pale pink) without looking childlike can be a challenge. To succeed at pulling it off gravitate towards small doses, preferably mixed with adults-only graphics, and pair it with something sexy and fitted. Sophisticated accessories in glam gold give pink a final boost to the big kid side. Effortless, chic and ready to play.

Printed tunic, $895, Jean Paul Gaulthier, from Holt Renfrew, holtrenfrew.com. White skinny jeans, Ra-re, $148, ra-re.it. Gold woven necklace, $30 and rings, $15 each, Aldo, aldoshoes.com. Chain link and Lucite bangles, $40 each, Fashionably Yours, fashionablyyours.ca. Orange silicone strap watch, $125, Tommy Hilfiger.

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# COZY CARIBBEAN

## Toronto's Room Service restaurant dishes out island flavours with a personal touch

« BY AMANDA ROBINSON »

(L-R) CO-OWNERS VANDERHOEK AND WASHINGTON, AND WAITRESS ANAK BA

IF YOU'RE WONDERING what a plate of ackee and saltfish stuffed inside of fried plantain tastes like, Toronto's Room Service restaurant is the answer to your culinary prayers. Offering the perfect balance between great food and a comfortable, intimate atmosphere, the quaint restaurant has a relaxed environment that's perfect for business, pleasure or both — a fact not lost on co-owner and head chef George Washington.

"A lot of Caribbean restaurants cater their business to a takeout audience," says Washington. "Often the restaurants are known for having loud music, bar stools and a flag on the wall representing a specific Caribbean country, which can sometimes be unwelcoming for people who want to sit in a quiet, neutral environment, socialize and still enjoy a jerk chicken dinner."

Reflecting its name, Room Service aims to cater to its customers, providing a personalized touch to the restaurant experience. "If you're staying in a hotel and you call for room service, they will bend over backwards to make sure your stay at the hotel is pleasurable. We have the same kind of concept here, where every customer is important to us and we try to nurture a relationship with each individual," says Washington.

Chef is even happy to provide samples to new patrons who aren't familiar with the menu and, because everything is cooked a la minutè, dishes can be created to taste preference ranging from mild to super spicy.

Washington developed a love for Caribbean cuisine at an early age. A child of Jamaican descent, his household chores included helping his mother cook. While he was in high school, Washington got his start at the Sheraton Hotel as a kitchen helper. His skills impressed one of the hotel's chefs, who took Washington under his wing, where he learned the art of real cooking.

"At the Sheraton, I got to see a larger picture, how meticulous the chefs are and the importance of perfection. Something that wasn't right could not be sent out," he says. "It was really stressed to me that your food is what represents your skills. I learned to take that kind of pride."

After working in dozens of Toronto restaurants, Washington found his interest in the food industry waning due to a lack of creativity and flare in Toronto kitchens. "I had a hard time with my bosses because I always wanted to add more colour, more flavours. Food was like a canvas to me. It was really art."

At age 25, he hung up his hat and started his own landscaping and security company. He would only cook on special occasions such as weddings or dinner parties of 10 or more people. But a spontaneous trip to Europe, during which he backpacked through Romania, Hungary and Germany, helped Washington to re-shift his focus to his dream of owning an upscale Caribbean restaurant.

Washington contacted longtime friend Tracy Vanderhoek, as well as two chefs with whom he had worked over the last two decades, and Room Service was born. "I chose to surround myself with people who have known me for a while because they understand my concept and what I'm trying to do, which is make Caribbean food mainstream, so people can come and have a shrimp salad and ackee and saltfish or they can have a stuffed chicken breast and curry goat.

"We're combining many authentic Caribbean dishes with many other dishes so that people have a choice. We're trying to get the message out there that you can have a nice Caribbean place and have more than just curry goat, jerk chicken and oxtail." ■

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PHOTOGRAPHY **MIHO TAKAYA**

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AT HOME WITH

# Robin Fraser

*Restaurant Makeover* interior designer speaks about the influence family has on decor

« BY LEROY GRAHAM »

IT'S NOT EVERY day that the opportunity presents itself to spend the day with one of Canada's top interior designers. But that was exactly the case when *Sway* was invited into the home of Robin Fraser, one of the featured designers on the Food Network's *Restaurant Makeover*. The exposure from the series has helped Fraser become one of Canada's most recognizable designers, which lead to work creating some of North America's most stylish spaces.

"I get a bunch of calls every time the show airs," says Fraser. "It's been a good opportunity and has connected me with new projects to showcase my design touch. TV is such an interesting medium because you reach so many people at once and are instantly in their frame of reference. Then, when it comes to the time they are looking for a designer, they may think of me."

But it is walking into Fraser's own family-friendly home that will likely give prospective clients reason to think of her when it comes time to design. Fraser's mid-town Toronto home, where she lives with her two children, features furniture, spaces and fixtures that put family first.

"My late husband and I looked at over 80 houses during our home search," Fraser recalls. "The funny thing is that this was the first house we saw. But it was a good time to buy so we really did our homework. Finally, I just put my foot down and said, 'We are getting this house'. It was one of the best decisions that we ever made and our family has been here ever since."

The Fraser home features high-end furniture, one-of-a-kind artwork, custom cabinetry and a sophisticated palette that might not immediately appear family focused. But behind the stylish design is a well-informed understanding of how space and function work together to meet the needs of a family.

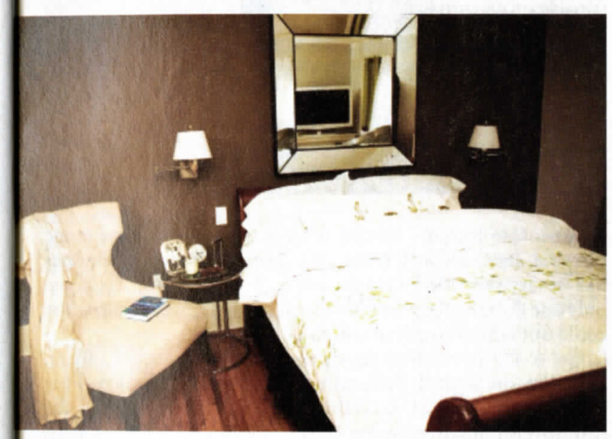
"There is a big difference between decor and design," says Fraser. "Decor is about trends but design is about function, how a space is used. Who will be using it? How will the space work? My home is meant to meet the needs of my family. There are little things that people may not notice.

"For example, the chairs in the dining room are stylish and comfortable, but not so comfortable that people at my dinner parties will stay in them all evening and not move into other areas of the house. In the kitchen, all of the dinnerware, glasses, etc., are located within a reachable height for my kids. The house functions for me, my kids and our guests. That's good design."

Relaxation is the dominating theme on the upper level of the house. A spa-like full bathroom is matched well with Fraser's own room, which serves as a sanctuary from difficult clients and busy after-school activities. "As a single mom and business woman, my days are just jam-packed. When I come upstairs I like to chill out with a good book, or relax listening to music. This is a place of serenity and peace, the colours and furniture choices here just allow me to bring things down and find a space to recharge for the next day."

Fraser's home design has impressed clients, friends and family so much that she often receives inquiries about the prospect of selling her house. But with two growing kids, great community roots, and a house that she adores, moving doesn't seem to be in the cards.

"This house has so many memories for me. So many things have happened here that I don't ever think I could leave," says Fraser. "Even though the house is worth a lot more than when we first purchased, it is not about the money for me. This house has been the scene of our history. It is where we meet with our friends and those we love. This house is an extension of our family... it's our home." ■



## Top tips from the designer

**THINK IT:** Think about how the space will function. Ask yourself who will be using the space and what will be its purpose. From there, you can think about pieces that will relate to the function of the space.

**SEE IT:** Look at the space that you've created and imagine that it is a picture in a design magazine. Ask yourself if it looks like it works. If it doesn't, there is something that you've missed.

**BUY IT:** Only buy the pieces that you love. Don't focus on price. You will spend every day of your life with those pieces. If something is ugly, you won't be consoled by the fact that it was cheap.

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PHOTOGRAPHY **MIHO TAKAYA**

# Small loans, big dreams

## Gems of Hope CEO Thierry Zomahoun turned micro-loans into major success

« BY CHRIS PENROSE »

OVERLOOKING AN UPPER enclave of the University of Toronto campus, Gems of Hope CEO, Thierry Zomahoun, rises from his seat and turns to the guests in his office. The personable executive begins to recount his childhood in Benin, West Africa, and as his audience takes in the events of his adolescence, a sudden wave of stillness overtakes the gathering.

"I was abandoned and lived as a street kid from three-years-old to about eight," he begins. "At the time I didn't realize how much I had learned from that. But growing up, I see that it determined everything I do in my professional life. It determines my choice of where I work, how I see the world and what my mission is."

Zomahoun's mission is simple: End poverty. The grand nature of this goal does not escape him. He understands that although he cannot totally eradicate poverty and its social ills, he can work to make a difference in various pockets of the world.

His organization, Gems of Hope, focuses on providing women in rural and highly impoverished regions of developing nations with micro-loans, small amounts of financing used to start and/or sustain businesses. Currently, Gems of Hope is working on projects in Peru, the Dominican Republic and India, with hopes of expanding to other areas of the Caribbean, Latin America, Asia and Africa.

The motivation behind his own success was the stern guidance that he received from his grandmother, who took him in at the age of eight. Zomahoun's facial expression releases a bit of strain when he moves past his early hardships and drops the jewel of the story: A micro-loan of a few dollars that his grandmother received to begin making and selling baked goods allowed him to go to school. And go to school he did, now holding two master's degrees and still working on an executive MBA.

"I am a product of micro-loans," he says. "The process simply provides people who would not otherwise qualify for a bank loan with the money they need to start a business and build

a sustainable income. Initiatives built from micro-loans range from raising chickens for eggs and small farming, to businesses like beauty shops and Internet cafes. My grandmother told me only one thing about going to school: 'You have one chance.' She could not afford for me to fail, so I didn't."

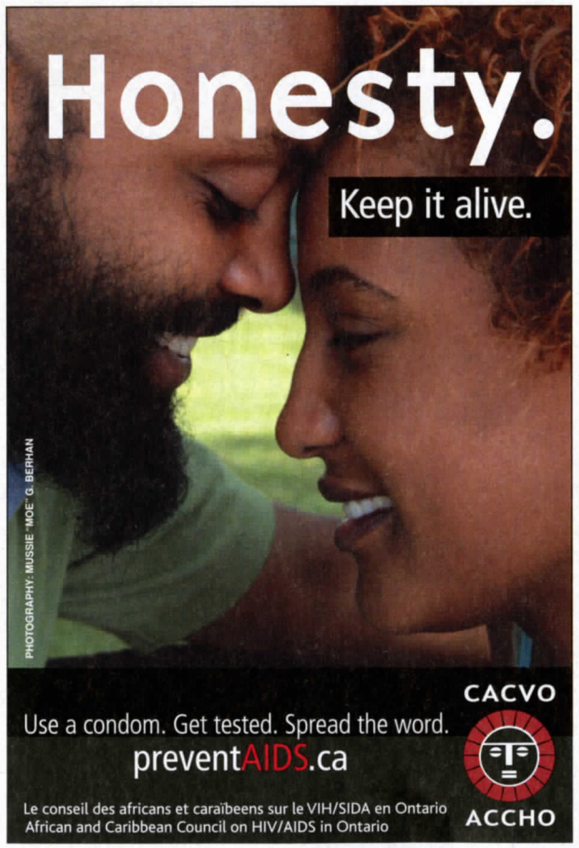
Gems of Hope reflects the drive of its chief executive officer, adopting the Nobel Prize-winning approach of micro-loan development to create success and empowerment in many of the world's most impoverished regions.

In addition to providing micro-loans, Gems of Hope also provides support to clients and communities through basic education and health care. "Without education their success is limited. They need basic literacy and numeracy to build their business and be able to manage their savings and investments.

"They also need health care because the earnings from microfinance too often go to health issues in the family. One person gets really sick and all of their savings and investment is gone." Where employed, this wrap-around approach is working.

When people think of development, they often think of aid. But Zomahoun is an advocate for the value of the responsibility of building a livelihood from a loan that you are required to pay back. "Giving out money doesn't help the people that you are giving it to, because they will have to come back to you tomorrow," he says.

If his ideology seems unshakable, it's because of his own experience. "Moving from the street as an abandoned child, to living with my grandma in abject poverty taught me that poverty, as I define it, is a deadly social disease because it deprives you of your self-confidence and dignity." The micro-loans, asserts Zomahoun, give people the opportunity to build on both. ■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PHOTOGRAPHY MIHO TAKAYA

# The career college crossroad

## Founder of the Toronto Institute of Pharmaceutical Technology provides tips for selecting a private college

« BY LEROY GRAHAM »

FOR MORE THAN a decade, the Toronto Institute of Pharmaceutical Technology (TIPT) has been regarded as one of North America's premier private career colleges. TIPT founder and current dean Dr. Alexander MacGregor speaks with *Sway* about Canada's private career college system and gives tips to prospective students on finding the right school.

**Many people believe that Canadian private career colleges don't provide adequate instruction to students and are simply out to make money. What do you say to that?**

There are bad schools out there. The reason that there are bad schools is because the system allows them to be bad. [Private career colleges] are not licensed, we are registered. There is a big difference between the two. Registration is a matter of compliance. You comply with certain set requirements before you can be reregistered. Licensing involves evaluation. So, to be licensed you have to be evaluated.

**What are some of the things one should look out for as a prospective student of a private career college?**

First of all, you want to assess whether or not the career college has a faculty. I am not referring to mere employees who teach — I am talking about a real faculty. A real faculty is a body of educators that are dedicated and engaged in some form of research in their field. Education is an evolving concept. The only way you can educate someone is if you are involved in some form of research yourself. That's how we measure every academic institution out there. Go to Cambridge or Harvard and you will find the best people, the best faculty, the best researchers. It is crucial that you see that they do really have a faculty.

**What is the real value of pursuing studies at a private career college?**

You are the buyer in this instance, because you are going to pay money for it. You have the right to know what you're buying. What you're buying is not a diploma — it's unfortunate that most people think like that. What you're buying is the value-added education that comes from the faculty. Most people miss that point. If faculty doesn't exist within your potential private career college then I wouldn't go to that school, period. Most private career colleges have a business model where they bring in supply teachers or part-time teachers, who come to teach for a day or two. That's fine, as long as there is a faculty base responsible for the content — a faculty committee or curriculum committee that reviews the curriculum to ensure it is current.

**What else should students look for if considering studies at a private career college**

Ask them to demonstrate the success of the program. To demonstrate the success of the program, they need to be able to, at least, give you verifiable profiles of six, seven or a dozen graduates who are successful in their field of study, who have worked and advanced in their industry. Those people will tell you how their training at a private career college has contributed to their success. You get a clear answer from them because these are people who no longer have any obligations to that school. They are independent and will tell you the truth. It's up to the school to gather this kind of information and make it available.

**Ultimately, it seems that alumni can be wonderful sources of information about private career colleges and assist prospective students in making post-secondary decisions.**

Any school worth its salt should be able to demonstrate the existence of an alumni base that is functional, active and can support and validate the core mission of the institute. Without those elements, everything else is sales talk. The other thing you could do is look at government websites. The government publishes default rates and graduation rates for all private career colleges. Default means that students who have borrowed money, have failed to pay back their government loan. The government believes that's an indirect measure of success. Do the research. The information is out there to help you make the right decision. ■

→ DR. ALEXANDER MACGREGOR, PHD, DSC, IS THE PRESIDENT AND CURRENT DEAN OF FACULTY AT THE TORONTO INSTITUTE OF PHARMACEUTICAL TECHNOLOGY (TIPT)

# A Northern TOUCH

## The National Society of Black Engineers marks its annual convention with a first-ever Canadian conference

« BY JASON ROBERTS »

THIS SPRING MARKS a historic event in Canada as the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) descends on Toronto to celebrate its 36th Annual Convention — the first in this country.

"The convention is taking place in Toronto because five years ago NSBE had the vision of holding an international convention, and taking their largest event beyond the borders of the United States," says Tanya Stephens, marketing and promotions manager for this year's convention.

Black students at Indiana's Purdue University started the NSBE in 1971 as a way to improve the recruitment and retention of black engineering candidates after a significant percentage of black freshmen had begun dropping out of engineering programs. Since that time, the NSBE has grown from a few students championing blacks in engineering-related fields into one of the largest student-run organizations anywhere in the world.

The move to hold the convention outside of the U.S. is part of the group's recent effort to make itself an organization capable of international impact. "Some people have said that holding the convention in Canada is just like holding it in the United States," says Stephens. "I challenge them on that. NSBE is a 33,000-member organization with the majority of its membership in the United States, some of whom have never left the U.S. This is a gateway to many other opportunities worldwide."

With the group's mission clearly aimed at creating a definite global reach, culturally diverse Toronto seems to be the perfect destination. "What better place to host a convention that teaches the merits of global reach than a city that has truly embraced it," says Stephens. During the five-day convention, students and NSBE alumni members will be engaged in a variety of activities, ranging from a three-day career and graduate school fair, to tours of famous Toronto landmarks.

Another reason Toronto was chosen for this year's convention is that Ontario is home to growing and established NSBE chapters, including those at the University of Toronto, Carleton and McGill. Also, NSBE's Youth Legacy program is at work implementing new programs in high schools across the Toronto area.

Ricky Neckles, former president of the NSBE chapter at the University of Toronto, argues against the idea that the field appeals only to those that are technically inclined.

"Anyone who would like to be part of the solution to the world's problems and challenges," Neckles says, "would make a great engineer." ■

➜ ENGINEERING A GLOBAL IMPACT, MAR 31-APR 4, METRO TORONTO CONVENTION CENTRE, 255 FRONT ST. W. FOR MORE INFO, VISIT NSBE.ORG



PHOTOGRAPHY MIHO TAKAYA

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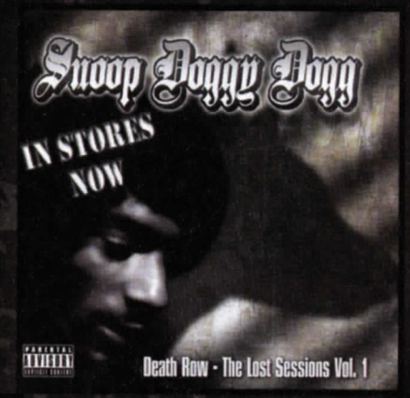


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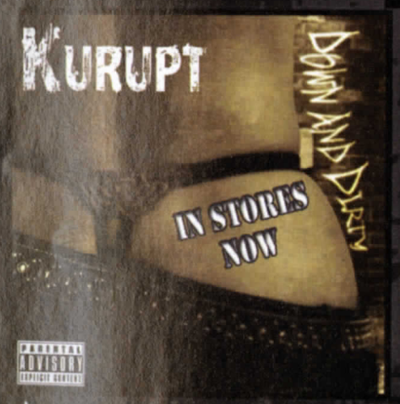


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# BBPA

## GOES WAY BEYOND GIVING OUT ANNUAL AWARDS

« BY PAULA MORRISON »

IN A TIME of slow economic recovery, the Black Business and Professional Association (BBPA) continues to be attuned to the needs of its members and looks to encourage and support the pursuit of entrepreneurship, professional excellence, higher education and economic empowerment.

Under the leadership of newly-elected president Pauline Christian, the organization is bringing forth new ideas that will allow its members to remain competitive in the Canadian market.

BBPA PRESIDENT PAULINE CHRISTIAN SPEAKS WITH YOUTH AT QUEEN'S PARK

"The BBPA is more ready than ever to step up to the plate and successfully deliver on its mandate for 2010 and service its members, partners and affiliates," says Christian. "We are on a clear path to achieve our goals."

For this year, the focus is on five key objectives: talent growth and retention within the organization, increased funding, community cohesion, expanding membership and developing a strong national presence.

If successful, this could be the year that the BBPA leaves a strong footprint on the Canadian market, demonstrating that it is *the* organization of choice to serve Canada's black communities.

Christian continues: "The BBPA has been around a long time. But, we have never had more resolve to succeed. I am humbled by the masses who've come forward to help achieve these goals — together we will spread our word and show this country what a vibrant community we are."

In the last few months alone, the BBPA has been busy working on an many creative initiatives such as the BBPA Leaders of Tomorrow Conference, an event that targets 300 students to realize personal success; a BBPA National Scholarship Fund, providing 50 students with scholarships; the Ebony Think Tank, a new initiative that brought together 30 community organizations to collaborate on community events and harmonize efforts between projects; a partnship with RBC to identify three Olympic torch bearers for the 2010 Olympics; all this plus the BBPA supported various Haiti Relief efforts. All the energy seems to be paying off. The BBPA recently reported a significant growth in its membership base. And with the Harry Jerome Awards just around the corner, 2010 is shaping up to be the best year for the BBPA.

"We are so motivated to move forward with all these initiatives," says Christian. "So many people are on board. More than ever before, I really feel a true sense of community. And we are so grateful for that." ■

→ BBPA HARRY JEROME AWARDS, SATURDAY, APRIL 24, TORONTO CONGRESS CENTRE, 650 DIXON RD, FOR TICKET INFO, VISIT BBPA.ORG OR CALL 416-504-4097

# COMMUNITY STRIDES

## Tropicana celebrates 30 years of helping others

« BY KIM ENGLAND »

FOR DECADES, TROPICANA Community Services, a Toronto-based non-profit organization, has been providing local youth, newcomers, and people of black and Caribbean heritage with opportunities and alternatives that lead to success and positive life choices.

The agency's culturally-appropriate programming includes counselling, child care, education, employment services and youth development.

Last summer, more than 1,000 youth from Toronto's 13 under-served communities had their first experience of paid employment with the Summer Jobs for Youth program. Participants were given the tools to succeed at work through job training and support, paid employment, and post-employment support. Now these same youth have a resume with work experience, which opens up new possibilities for their future.

Last year, Tropicana also launched the Kennedy-Eglinton ProTech Media Centre. Says Sharon Shelton, executive director of Tropicana: "We're delighted to provide youth in this under-served community with free access to state-of-the-art technology that introduces them to potential careers in new media while providing computer literacy skills and creating opportunities for self-expression."

With 2010 marking Tropicana's 30th anniversary, one of the agency's key goals moving forward is to raise the required funds to secure a building for Tropicana's Centre of Excellence. Currently, several of Tropicana's programs are spread over six separate locations, making multi-service access difficult for clients. The proposed centre will enable Tropicana to provide integrated services and to house community facilities including counselling rooms, classrooms, a teaching kitchen and a gym. ■

"I REALLY APPRECIATE THIS SERVICE FOR PEOPLE LIKE MYSELF WHO ARE IN DESPERATE NEED OF ASSISTANCE. I WOULDN'T HAVE HAD ANY HOPE IF IT WASN'T FOR TROPICANA. THANK YOU."

— *Melissa, Toronto*

→ TROPICANA'S 17TH ANNUAL CARIBBEAN BALL, ROOTS & PASSION: CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF EXCELLENCE, ON THE PARK, 1095 LESLIE, JUNE 5, 2010. FOR MORE INFO, CALL 416-439-9009 OR GO TO TROPICANACOMMUNITY.ORG/GALA2010



PHOTOGRAPHY ROY VIRTUE



# GIMME ~~SHELTER~~ centre

## Promoting self-care and self-confidence for local women

« BY FELICIA CARTY »

IF YOU EVER meet Dr. Roz, you might want to be careful using the "S" word.

"I did not build a shelter. It's a centre," she says, carefully straightening out any misunderstanding. As executive director of the Dr. Roz Healing Place (DRHP), she understands the difference in nomenclature to go beyond syntax. It's a distinction incorporated in a vision she fought tirelessly to realize, and one that is a key philosophical component in her quest to eradicate violence against women and children. Roz Roach — she prefers Dr. Roz — runs what was formerly the Emily Stow Shelter For Women. After raising $4-million to completely rebuild the structure, which opened its doors in 2004, renamed in her honour.

"'Shelter' has a lot of negative connotations. It's a place where women go to hide from their husbands," Dr. Roz explains of the latter part of the name change. "While we do house abused families, women who come here need to get involved in healing programs. We want them to become healthy, self-sufficient adults."

Housing up to 33 individuals at a time, the centre offers women a chance to escape domestic violence and change the course of their lives through holistic and comprehensive measures. Such measures may include frontline counselling, an ex-resident and transitional support program as well as child and youth programs, ensuring the needs of the entire family are met.

The most recent numbers from Statistics Canada show that each year more than 50,000 women in the country take refuge in a shelter. "Violence is everywhere," Dr. Roz says. "Violence crosses racial groups, socioeconomic groups, religious groups, age group. It has nothing to do with colour or culture."

According to Dr. Roz, there is one common thread that seems to tie these women together — also as an Achilles heel. That commonality is many women's belief it is their job to take care of everyone else, which causes women to lose themselves in the process. "We are fixing everyone, fixing everything, and cannot fix ourselves," says Dr. Roz.

It is this coupling of duty toward others and a lack of love and care for oneself that creates conditions for the proliferation of abuse toward women. "If a woman is really self-loving, she would know early on when the man begins to abuse her and say, 'No, I'm not going to take this,'" Dr. Roz explains. "But so often they get caught up and they stay for so many reasons. At the end of it all, the message that women should get is that they first need to self-care and self-love."

Today, Dr. Roz continues her mission to empower and heal, while raising awareness throughout the world and impacting individual women as a frontline worker. She is currently raising funds to build the Changa House — a centre akin to the DRHC, but for children and youth. It will address what Dr. Roz says are learned patterns of violence.

To help foot the $5-million bill, proceeds from Dr. Roz's recently published book, *We Owe it to Ourselves to be Well*, will go toward the new initiative. Filled with original poetry, inspirational quotes, biographical inserts and photographic portraits, Dr. Roz calls the work "more of a coffee table book." Just a glimpse at the cover, which features a strong portrait of Dr. Roz, serves as proof that she practices what she preaches — confidence in one's own skin. ■

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# A CLEAR VISION FOR BRAMPTON

IS EXPERIENCE AND FORWARD THINKING ENOUGH TO MAKE FORMER CITY COUNCILLOR GARNETT MANNING THE CITY'S NEXT MAYOR?

« BY ERICA PHILLIPS »

GARNETT MANNING IS passionate about youth and he loves Brampton. That's why he wants to be the city's mayor.

"I'm not running against the other candidates, I'm running with a vision for Brampton," he says. "With the challenges of uncontrolled growth and property taxes, escalating youth violence and seniors at risk of being taxed out of their homes, Brampton's most urgent need is a clear vision for the future and a balanced plan for growth and development."

The former city councillor wants Brampton to be a healthy community, where people know their neighbours and more amenities are within walking distance of their homes. He is willing to work with builders and developers, and asserts that there needs to be a different approach to building. Manning also believes that northwest Brampton presents opportunities for a live-work community. "We have to shift from being a dormitory community to a more integrated community."

One of the issues Manning wants to tackle is the response from downtown businesses to the expansion of City Hall and the revitalization of downtown Brampton. He says the businesses currently don't believe the expansion of the city's administrative offices will benefit them. Manning even wants to build strong relationships with every level of government and other municipalities for a better city. "We are not in competition with Mississauga," he clarifies.

Manning, who served one term (2003 to 2006) as a councillor in northeast Brampton for Wards 9 and 10, and occasionally served as acting mayor, said the wards in which he worked are two of the city's most diverse. Brampton, overall, has a population of more than 452,000, with more than 175 ethnic groups who speak more than 70 languages. Manning is clear that he wants to be mayor for all of the people of Brampton and says it makes no sense to service only one community. He has a track record of representing different groups to back up the talk.

As a councillor, Manning advocated for the creation of the Brampton Soccer Centre, and established the first library facility in northeast Brampton (a temporary site). A supporter of seniors, he also secured facilities and park services for mature adults in Springdale and Castlemore through the advocacy process. After serving as councillor, Manning became an outreach worker with the Brampton Neighbourhood Resource Centre (BNRC) for three years. The experience gave him special insight into the concerns of a range of residents: "People need leaders who are sensitive to their needs. I learned that through BNRC and working in the community."

Aside from being chair and founder of the Garnett Manning Youth and Leadership Foundation, Manning is also a board member with the Peel Children's Aid Society, has volunteered with the United Achievers Club of Brampton and the Brampton Citizens for a Great City Advisory Committee. He has several community recognition accolades, including a Brampton Clean City Award. ■

## BRAMPTON'S POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

Brampton is a very diverse city. According to the 2006 census, more than 53,000 residents identified themselves as black. The following black candidates are running for office this October:

**GARNETT MANNING**
Mayor

**LEN CARBY**
Regional Councillor (Wards 2 and 6)

**YAW OSEI-ANING**
City Councillor
(Wards 1 and 5)

**DAVID GREEN***
Trustee Peel District School Board
(Wards 1 and 3)

**SUZANNE NURSE***
Trustee Peel District School Board
(Wards 2, 9 and 10)

**CAROLE WALKER**
Trustee Peel District School Board
(Wards 4, 5 and 6)

**incumbent*

Municipal politicians (city and regional councillors and school trustees) handle many of the issues that affect you everyday. These issues include: social housing, building regulations and permits, local heritage resources, public transit, land use, urban design, snow removal, roads, libraries, animal services, fire and emergency services, property taxes, sanitation, business licensing, parks and recreation, schools (i.e. expulsions) and more.

→ MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS TAKE PLACE ACROSS ONTARIO ON OCT. 25, 2010



PHOTOGRAPHY MIHO TAKAYA

# Street legal in Scarborough

For the first time, a Bay Street law firm provides pro bono services to one of Toronto's priority neighbourhoods

« BY NATASHA CARR »

A BAY STREET LAW firm with a vision of narrowing the gap between individuals who can afford legal services and those who cannot has partnered with three other organizations to provide a full range of legal services, completely free. It is the first time a Bay Street law firm has offered all of its services on a pro bono basis.

The firm, Heenan Blaikie LLP, in partnership with Pro Bono Law Ontario, the City of Toronto and East Scarborough Storefront (an umbrella organization with more than 40 agencies), is providing its legal services to the Kingston-Galloway area of Scarborough, one of the city's 13 priority neighbourhoods.

Heenan Blaikie lawyers Ryan Teschner and Trevor Guy spearheaded the project, which took almost two years to plan. The two associates saw a trend in which existing legal aid services were not enough to address the needs of the Kingston-Galloway community.

"This area of Scarborough has the highest unemployment rate and persons living in social housing in Ontario," says Teschner. "Our initiative hopes to support the people who fall within this gap."

Teschner and his colleague understand the legal challenges individuals may face because of limited resources and lack of access. The lawyer said they take this matter seriously. "Certain social issues transcend all boundaries," Teschner says. "It is my duty as a lawyer to make the justice system more accessible. Some people can't afford counsel and end up representing themselves in court, and not in the best of their interest. It is a duty, as a lawyer in Ontario, to provide services to those who really do need it."

If a resident wants to use the services, he or she has to visit East Scarborough Storefront and fill out an intake form. The potential client must also fulfill the prerequsite set by Heenan Blaikie and East Scarborough Storefront. A lawyer from the firm will then contact the person to review the case. If the case qualifies, the client will receive a lawyer on a pro bono basis, provided the case is in an area of law in which Heenan Blaikie practices.

Teschner is grateful this initiative has come to fruition because, as he puts it, "Without access, there will not be justice." ■



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# Canada's Haitians REACH OUT

*After Haiti was leveled by a 7.0 magnitude earthquake and more than 200,000 of its people perished, aftershocks trembled across the country's terrain for days, toppling the already devastated infrastructure, homes and, in some cases, spirits. In Montreal, about 100,000 Haitians watched and listened, stunned. At the same time, they got to planning. Sway found three Haitian Montrealers, each contributing in a different way*

« BY SAADA BRANKER »

FABIENNE COLAS: ACTRESS AND FOUNDER OF THE FABIENNE COLAS FOUNDATION AND THE MONTREAL INTERNATIONAL BLACK FILM FESTIVAL

## Reuniting families

THE WAITING LEFT Fabienne Colas breathless with fear for her family. She says on Jan. 12 she sat in her Montreal home for hours, after learning an earthquake tore apart her native country. "At first, I couldn't get a hold of them at all," says Colas, whose calls to her father wouldn't connect. "That was a hard night. I couldn't sleep because I kept dialing." The next day at 5 am, she found him. "I was in such shock that I asked him, 'Oh, Daddy, are you alive?'"

Colas' father and stepmother were unharmed, as were her mother and sister. An aunt and an uncle were not as fortunate. They died when their home collapsed. Colas' family survived for days with no food or shelter, until her husband travelled to Haiti with food. He promised he'd do his best to return with everyone. "He ended up coming with them all. It was not easy, but they're here and it's a dream come true because secretly I hoped we'd all be together," says Colas.

In interviews, Colas, 30, was one of the first people to publicly petition the Quebec government to speed up the reunification of families. That petition would help to increase the rate at which Haitians, already being sponsored, were allowed to leave the devastated island. "We're not really asking them for a special favour because those people would come anyways in the next five years," Colas says.

Six years ago, before coming to Canada, Colas was a popular actress in Haiti. Today, she is the president of the Foundation Fabienne Colas, which promotes Haitian arts, cinema and culture through film festivals and summer showcases in Montreal. The former Miss Haiti explains that she also approached Quebec's cable and long-distance company, Videotron, to appeal for one week of free calls from Montreal to the Caribbean country. Two days after the quake, Videotron announced free calls to Haiti for its subscribers for an entire month. By early February, Quebec's immigration minister announced that the province would relax rules for extended family members so they could emigrate from Haiti. It wasn't the first time Quebec came through for Haitians. In the late 1960s it was the first province ever to have a special immigration agreement with the federal government in a bid to increase its French-speaking population through immigration. "I was impressed," says an appreciative Colas of the government's relaxed rules. "We're desperate, we need help. I put so much belief that someone will listen and hear me."

LUCK MERVIL: SINGER SONGWRITER AND HUMANITARIAN

## Calling on the media

LUCK MERVIL SAW the images of Haiti hours after the earth shuddered and he knew. People had little idea of how big the earthquake was says the Haiti-born singer, who is familiar with Port-au-Prince. But he knew the caved-in state of the presidential palace was a bad sign. Mervil told people, "This palace should not fall down. It's a huge bunker. If it's down then everything is down."

Mervil is one of Quebec's best-known Haitian artists. For eight years the singer-songwriter has travelled the world as the spokesperson for the Centre for International Studies and Cooperation (CECI). He's touched down in about 15 developing countries, such as India, Nepal, Senegal and Haiti, assisting with humanitarian aid.

Mervil had an idea to hold a telethon on several media networks for Haiti. He says he studied in Canada most of his life and had come to realize that "one of the greatest powers of our time is not legal or political, but the media." Encouragement came from Pierre Karl Peladeau, CEO of media giant Quebecor.

In meetings with the heads of television networks and radio stations, Mervil told everyone his goal was simple: "We raise as much money as we can, as fast as we can, to save as many lives as we can. If that's what you want to do with me, let's go." Six days after the quake, the telethon ran for two and a half hours on several Quebec television networks, and simultaneously on at least five radio stations. More than $6.5-million was raised. Mervil, 42, said it was essential his team remained positive and didn't inundate people with negative images. "The 2004 tsunami was one of the events where the whole world was there. Haiti was the second one," he says. "Let Haiti become the first worldwide capital of humanity."

SANDRA MATHIEU: VOLUNTEER TRANSLATOR AND ASPIRING FILMMAKER

## Returning with shelter

SANDRA MATHIEU TRAVELLED to Haiti on Jan. 23 with the Association of Haitian Physicians Abroad (AMHE). Born in Montreal, Mathieu had never visited her parents' birthplace. Upon her arrival, she worked at the General Hospital in Port-au-Prince. "That first ride to the hospital was hard," she recalls. Mathieu says the suffering around her was such that she had trouble focusing during the first couple of days, as she helped to distribute food and water.

"Two days before I left, I met a lot of people," says Mathieu. "One was Rony. He was a translator for the International Medical Corps." Rony approached Mathieu, asking where he could find a tent for his family. Mathieu didn't know. Back in Canada, she pondered her time spent in Haiti. "I have to go back, but this time for one month," she says. "I wondered how [else] I could help."

The next time Mathieu spoke to Rony it was by telephone. Both of them knew Haiti's rainy season was starting. "Still after one month, he had no tent. He told me, 'I'm not even one of the people who is wounded or an amputee.'"

Mathieu, 26, decided to organize a campaign to donate 500 tents, which, with the help of an airline company, she'll send to Port-au-Prince. "I can go and give the tents and help the government with the logistics," says Mathieu, who recently left a research and development position in IT so she could donate more time to Haiti's recovery. She appealed to her church, River's Edge, and to her university, gathering enough support to secure 10 tents (most made to hold five people). She needs more.

Mathieu says there is opportunity for more hands to join in rebuilding. "Now is the time for the Haitian Diaspora to come back, take their skills and put them towards their home country." She remarks on the country's beauty, but laments its longstanding state of disrepair. "I'm thinking of planting new trees in Port-au-Prince and cleaning up the garbage. Whatever I can do." Before the earthquake, Mathieu says, she was questioning if she was meant to be working in IT. Now she's preparing for Haiti, and for a career in filmmaking. "It took an earthquake for me to take this step and go." ■

# Toronto's helping hands for Haiti

**1 ARIEL DELUY: PRESIDENT OF MAKAYA GROUP, A MANAGEMENT CONSULTING COMPANY**
*(makayagroup.com)*

In late January, Ariel Deluy, an engineer, travelled to Haiti with a team of four other engineers, a project manager and a business manager. Makaya Group secured 25 hectares of land to build 300 to 400 homes in Mirebalais and Lascahobas, north of the capital.

"We're trying to launch a massive online campaign to [get people to] donate money to the homes or donate construction equipment," says Deluy. "We're physically rebuilding homes, but we're also rebuilding lives and the communities."

**2 JEAN CARLO ROUZIER: CO-FOUNDER OF GROUPE PROFESSIONAL HAÏTIEN DE TORONTO**
*(gpht.ca)*

GPHT developed a three-prong approach in its fundraising for Haiti, which reached $50,000. The first prong is working with UNICEF: "We collaborated with them for Haiti's hurricane relief last year," says Jean Carlo Rouzier. Second, is GPHT's individual fundraising drive: "We unleashed a small army of volunteers to collect pledges for UNICEF. I raised $1,500 alone from my workplace," he says. Third, the group organized cultural fundraising events to showcase Haiti's rich culture. So far, GPHT has held a silent auction, sold a music compilation entitled *Haiti-Cherie* and sold paintings by Haitian artists David Vasquez and Philippe Dodard.

**3 DR. ERIC PIERRE: DENTIST AND PRESIDENT OF PIERSPECTIVE ENTRAIDE HUMANITAIRE AND HAITI'S HONOURARY CONSUL IN TORONTO**
*(haitiaide.ca)*

Dr. Eric Pierre's organization of volunteers has a history of assisting Haiti with donations over the years. This time, Pierre says about five containers of goods are waiting for clearance to go to Haiti's port. "Now we have shifted our focus to education. Our goal is to build a school and community centre," says Pierre. Children of refugees are the most deserving of such attention, he reasons. The dedicated dentist believes that rebuilding is possible for Haitians. "Give them hope to face the challenges ahead."

**For information on how to donate to the Sway Scholarship Fund for Haitian refugees, contact Haiti Consul General Dr. Pierre at 416-538-3282.**



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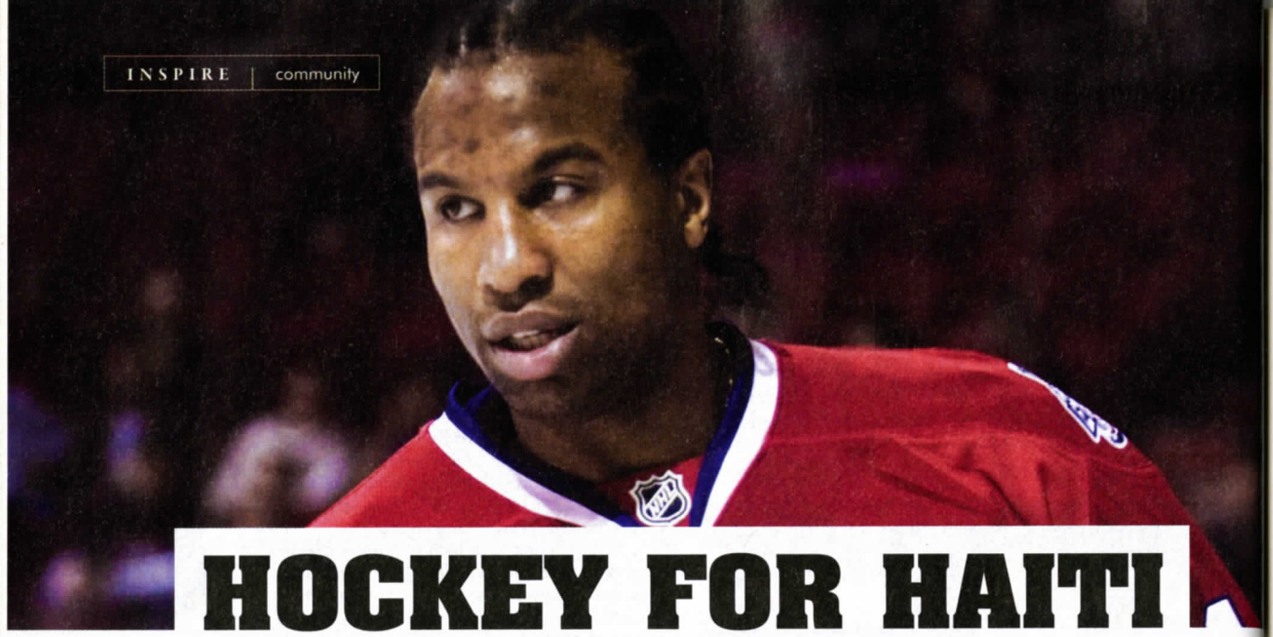


# HOCKEY FOR HAITI

## NHL VETERAN GEORGES LARAQUE IS WORKING TO HELP REBUILD THE EARTHQUAKE-RAVAGED NATION

« BY DUANE WATSON »

ON JAN. 12, a catastrophic earthquake that reached 7.0 on the Richter scale devastated the island of Haiti killing 200,000 and injuring an estimated 300,000. This incident brought Georges Laraque, a National Hockey League tough guy of Haitian descent to his knees faster than any hockey fight punch. Laraque was left trying to determine if members of his family were dead, missing or foraging for food on the streets of Port-au-Prince. Nine days later, with major aftershocks still ravaging the island, Laraque faced another punishing blow. The Montreal Canadiens brought the hardnosed enforcer's season to an abrupt end, releasing him with more than 30 games left to play.

"When the earthquake happened, there's nothing that could have made me feel worse," the Montreal native says. "How can I complain about anything when people are dying everyday? Getting cut was a blessing. I could do something good with this time, find a way to help the people down there and show my support."

Laraque is no stranger to giving back. He has made a point of engaging in the community throughout his career. Rallying in his charge for earthquake relief are the NHL Players' Association (NHLPA) and the league itself. Each organization donated $100,000 to Laraque's project, Hockey for Haiti.

"After our research, myself and the NHLPA, associated with World Vision, wanted to build a hospital. The Grace hospital went down and we have ensured that all of the money raised is going to rebuild it." Laraque has not been to Haiti yet, but plans to go in less than a month with World Vision.

The rugged right-winger readily admits this is the toughest fight of his career. "If God would've told me, 'Georges, let's go back in time. We're going to sacrifice your career, you're going to have an everyday job, but I guarantee you that this tragedy doesn't happen.' I would do it in a heartbeat," he says emphatically.

"I've been playing in the NHL for 12 years, made all this money, lived this nice life in Canada, yet I'm complaining about the smallest things. When I see what's going on, I feel guilty. I feel useless. I feel like I should be down there. Every time I turn on CNN and see those images, I think how lucky I am. That's one of the hardest things, because I could have been there, like maybe it should have been me?"

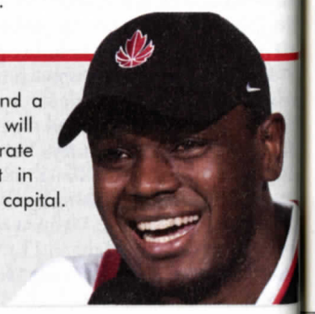
Always the fighter, Laraque also feels his hockey career is far from over. "There's no way that my last memory of the NHL is being released on Jan. 21," he says. "It's not how I am going to end my career, I still have a couple of good years left in me. I look forward to coming back and showing that I can be an impact player."

Yet, if he never takes the ice again, the impact he's made on Haiti and communities abroad is indelible. ■

### An athlete's helping hand

If Wyclef Jean is Haiti's first son, NBA basketball player Samuel Dalembert is its second. Born in Port-au-Prince, and raised in Montreal, the centre for the Philadelphia 76ers has already skipped practices to return home since the quake. He even went back to Haiti during the NBA's all-star weekend.

Dalembert has personally pledged $375,000 to UNICEF and the Haitian government has agreed to lease him land to build a youth centre. The centre will host classrooms, a library, a computer lab and a cafeteria. It will also generate employment in the nation's capital.



## HELP HAITI RESOURCE GUIDE

**»Canadian Red Cross**
The Canadian arm of the international aid and medical relief organization works around the world through the federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent societies, based in Geneva, Switzerland.
**Website: www.redcross.ca**
E-mail: onlinedonations@redcross.ca
Phone: 613-740-1900

**»Unicef Canada**
This well-known organization's goal is to raise funds to support UNICEF's work for children in more than 150 countries. It also builds awareness among Canadians about the issues facing the world's children.
**Website: www.unicef.ca**
E-mail: secretary@unicef.ca
Phone: 416-482-4444

**»The Humanitarian Coalition**
This group is a joint effort between Oxfam Canada, Oxfam Quebec, CARE Canada and Save the Children. The humanitarian organization is dedicated to a united response in cases of humanitarian crises.
**Website: www.thehumanitariancoalition.ca**

**»Hopital Albert Schweitzer**
Through funding from registered charities like Canadian Friends of Hopital Albert Schweitzer - Haiti, this hospital provides frontline relief in Haiti and has been doing so for more than half a century. The facility is now fully committed to treating victims of the recent earthquake.
**Website: www.hashaiti.org**
E-mail: info@hashaiti.org
Phone: 412-361-5200

**»International Child Care Canada**
The Canadian branch of this Christian non-profit runs Grace Children's Hospital as well as maternal health, community health and rehab programs in Haiti.
**Website: ca.internationalchildcare.org**
E-mail: canada@internationalchildcare.org
Phone: 1-888-722-4453 ext.295

**»The Mennonite Central Committee**
MCC's work in Haiti has focused on reforestation, environmental education, human rights and advocacy for food security. MCC is responding to the Haiti earthquake with emergency assistance, long-term reconstruction and trauma support.
**Website: www.mcc.org**
E-mail: donate@mcc.org
Phone: 1-888-563-4676

**»Centre d'etude et de cooperation internationale (CECI)**
CECI is a private, not-for-profit corporation that fights poverty around the world, and has operations based in Haiti. CECI has had a permanent presence in Haiti for the last 30 years. It had 150 team staff in the country before the quake hit.
**Website: www.ceci.ca/en/**
E-mail: info@ceci.ca
Phone: 514-875-9911

**»Shelterbox**
Shelterbox.ca is a Canadian organization that distributes boxes containing a 10-person tent and survival equipment. Every $1,000 collected provides shelter for a family of 10 for up to six months.
**Website: Shelterbox.ca**
E-mail: shelterbox@shelterbox.ca
Phone: 250-595-5974

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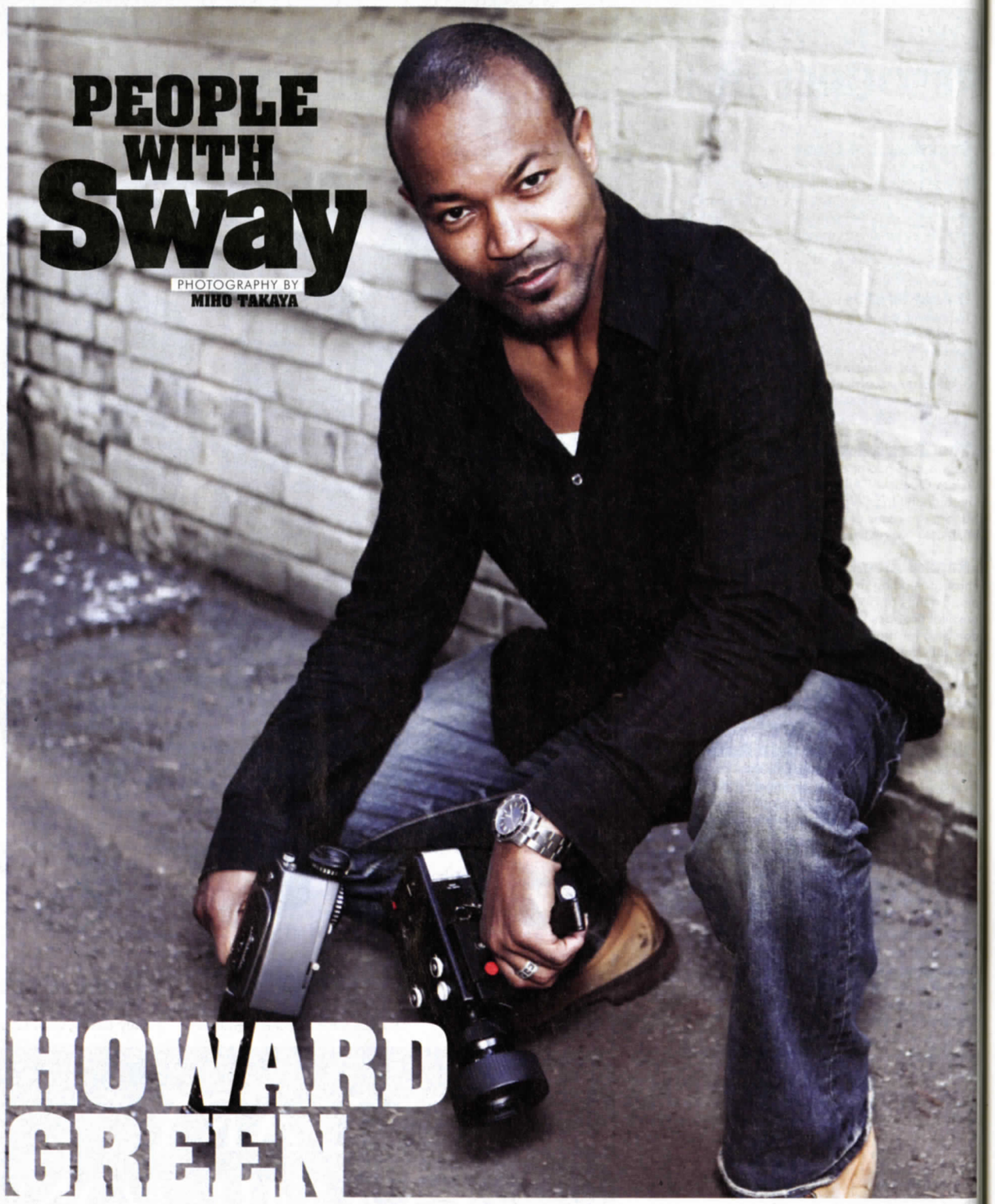
# PEOPLE WITH Sway

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
MIHO TAKAYA



## HOWARD GREEN

**OCCUPATION**
Howard Green is quickly making his mark as a maverick within North America's billion-dollar movie industry. Having worked as an actor and stuntman on films such as *Love Come Down*, *Exit Wounds* and *The Incredible Hulk*, Green most recently jumped behind the camera, producing the award-winning suspense thriller *Machete Joe*.

**CONTRIBUTION**
Disappointed at the lack of opportunity for black actors within mainstream film and television, Green has worked tirelessly to open the doors of accessibility within the entertainment industry. In 2009, he travelled to Cannes with Toronto consulting firm Film Market Access to connect with international movers and shakers and promote diversity in film.

**INSPIRATION**
"I have really been inspired by the late, great Bruce Lee. I studied martial arts and boxing from an early age. One day I was working out at the Lansdowne Boxing Club and they were filming a part of the *Friday the 13th* series. The director came up to me and asked me if I wanted to be a part of the film. Ever since that time I've been hooked."

## NIKKI CLARKE

**OCCUPATION**
Nikki Clarke plays the dual role of host and producer with thatchannel.com, Canada's most popular online television website. Handling everything from news to pop culture, Clarke is responsible for programming content that informs millions of Canadians each week.

**CONTRIBUTION**
Along with her work at thatchannel.com, Clarke is also the owner/operator of Nikki Clarke Inc., a full-service public relations, management and consulting firm that works with community organizations to secure organizational sponsorship and investment.

**INSPIRATION**
"My parents have inspired me from day one. Growing up with a father that was a pastor and a mother that was a teacher wasn't always easy. They were always concerned with my academics and encouraged me to advance as far as I could. Their dedication and focus taught me the lessons of hard work and perseverance. These are the lessons that I pass onto my three children today."

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# PEOPLE WITH Sway

# ROXANE TRACEY

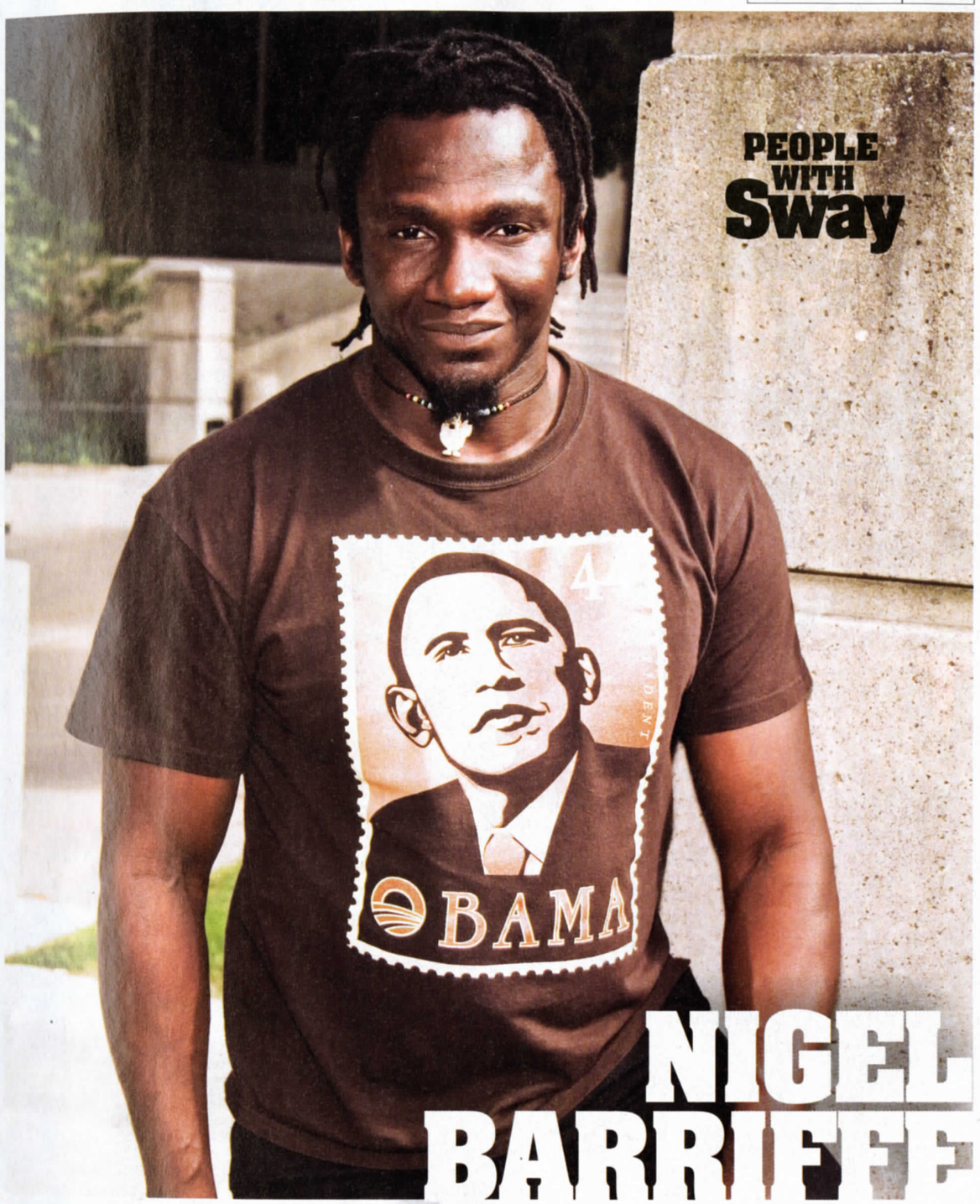
**OCCUPATION**
Roxane Tracey is the creative force behind Toronto's newest black-inspired art space, Poetic Art Studio. The space is a blended gallery and workshop that features artistic prints, products and instruction.

**CONTRIBUTION**
Celebrating her roots through a fusion of art and poetry, Tracey's work has caught the attention of art lovers across North America. Her studio provides emerging and established artists with a space to showcase their work, while also nurturing the talents of the next generation of iconic artists through youth workshops.

**INSPIRATION**
"I attempt to communicate spiritual beauty, strength and hope with the intention of inspiring the viewer to find these elements within themselves."








# PEOPLE WITH Sway

# NIGEL BARRIFFE

**OCCUPATION**
Following a 20-year career in the business and IT sectors, Nigel Barriffe decided to switch gears and enter the teaching profession to give back to the community that had given him so much. Today, he is an elementary school teacher with the Toronto District School Board.

**CONTRIBUTION**
Barriffe holds the roles of public relations officer with the African Heritage Educators Network and program development committee member with the Canadian Alliance of Black Educators. As if that weren't enough, Barriffe also acts as a staff resident in one of Toronto's custody facilities for at-risk youth. It is a role that provides him with firsthand experience mentoring marginalized youth who have been confronted with many social, emotional and legal challenges.

**INSPIRATION**
"I am truly inspired by these kids. Today there is so much out there that opposes their success — drugs, gangs, etc. But despite it all, they have a capacity to endure and a thirst to learn. Each day I come into work thankful for what I do. It is an absolutely amazing experience."

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PHOTOGRAPHY **TONY SLADDEN**

# 'The Bridge' to SUPER-STARDOM

## *Toronto-born singer Melanie Fiona talks about her journey to the top of the charts*

« BY DEL F. COWIE »

**TOO SAY THINGS** are going well for Toronto R&B singer-songwriter Melanie Fiona would be an understatement. When *Sway* magazine caught up with Fiona in the midst of her whirlwind schedule, she was in New York City. It was not long after the Grammys, and Fiona scored a nomination for Best Female R&B Vocal Performance for the song *It Kills Me*. She lost to Beyoncé's *Single Ladies* — no shame there — she was just happy to be nominated.

"It just took away from the pressure of actually winning the award or not," she says. "I just wanted to go and have a good time. My parents flew down, they were proud. It was a real dream come true."

But the highlight for Fiona wasn't the glitz and glamour of the Grammy gala. That same weekend, a parade of music superstars convened in a recording studio to remake *We Are the World* for the victims of the catastrophic earthquake that struck Haiti earlier this year. "Coming off the high of the Grammys, I got to see and be around some of the greats in music for such an amazing cause." Rubbing shoulders with the likes of Quincy Jones, Gladys Knight and Lionel Richie is the result of years of hard work for Fiona, now at a turning point in her career. The aforementioned *It Kills Me*, from her debut album *The Bridge*, is a show-stopping ballad that has elevated Fiona into another realm. At the time of this interview, the emotionally charged song, which details the internal conflict and turmoil of a stormy relationship, had been No.1 on Billboard's R&B/Hip-Hop Songs chart for an impressive eight weeks. For her part, Fiona never doubted that the song would be a success.

"The emotion that *It Kills Me* has is what makes it so unique," she says. "We knew that this was our monster record. We knew that when it was time, we were going to hit. But you never really know when the right time is, so we released it as the second single and it just took off."

The song was co-written by Andrea Martin, a songwriter whose credits also include classic '90s R&B staples such as En Vogue's *Don't Let Go*, Monica's *Before You Walk Out of My Life* and SWV's *You're the One*. However, Fiona's relationship with Martin goes beyond business. They are now close friends and share the same heritage.

"What! She's Guyanese," says Fiona. "That was our first bond when we first met. It was really cool. She actually has the same birthday as my mom. On all levels we just kind of connected and had a lot in common. Now we're like family, for sure."

It was actually a family connection that first attracted Fiona to music. Her father played guitar in a Toronto group and her mother loved to sing. People would often ask her to sing when she was young, and while in high school she joined a Canadian female R&B trio called Xquisite, which also featured current MTV Canada host Nicole Holness and Toronto R&B artist Andreena Mill. After they disbanded, Fiona persevered with a solo career, occasionally jamming with local artists. She was even briefly in a group with Toronto hip-hop artist Drake, until she got a break with an L.A. management company while she was what she describes "young, fresh and green."

"I just naturally fell in the pocket," she says. "I realized I was going to miss my family's birthdays, I wasn't going to be home for every holiday. I was going to have to sacrifice working a regular job, making a steady income to spend money to hopefully make income. It wasn't easy sacrificing my life, basically, to get here.

"It's not for everybody. I can't honestly just turn around and say that if you picked up a plane ticket you could make it too. I know people who quit this race a long time ago because they can't fathom the thought of being away from their families or not having money or not having a place to live and really struggling."

Working under the name Syren at the beginning of her solo career, Fiona tried to find her sound by collaborating with a variety of producers. "It took a little bit on a creative level, before I had my record deal, to try to explain to people who I am and where



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I come from and what that means to my music," she says. "That was a little bit different. Going [into a studio in] Toronto and being like, 'I want to do some music that reflects my heritage.' People would be like, 'OK, we'll have a little bit of calypso, reggae, a little bit of R&B and a little bit of pop.' They would understand that right away. Whereas in the States, I would say, 'I'm Guyanese.' [They'd respond], 'What? You're from Ghana?' They didn't understand the culture and they didn't understand where I came from. So, it was definitely difficult for me, at first, to find producers who understood the vision of the type of music I grew up listening to."

Still, for the most part, her realities in the U.S. and in Canada were polar opposites. "I just kinda kept [my career] south of the border. It was kind of like a double life I was living," she says. "I would come home, go to school. I'd be a daughter, a sister, a friend, a girlfriend in Canada. Then I would leave and be [living] in hotel rooms, and recording and going to events that were kind of unheard of for Canadians. I always kept it that way because I knew that being in the States was work and Canada was home."

Despite this reality, under the name Syren, Fiona was able to release songs like *My First Love*, which was remixed into an up-tempo house track, and the Supa Dups-produced *Somebody Come Get Me*, a selection featured on the *Reggae Gold 2008* compilation. The song actually led her to open for reggae legend Beres Hammond in Toronto.

Yet, the business aspect of her career remained firmly in the U.S. and reached a critical point when music executive Steve Rifkind, the founder of influential '90s hip-hop label Loud and the man responsible for launching the careers of the Wu-Tang Clan and Akon, among others, decided he wanted to set up a meeting.

"My name was kind of floating around because I was shopping a deal," she says. "Steve set up a meeting and came into one of my studio sessions. I played the music and he was like, 'Oh, my God. You're a star! You're a star! I'm gonna fly you to New York and we're gonna figure it out.' He put me in front of his staff and was like, 'I've gotta sign her. I can't pass on this.' The next day he put the paperwork in front of me and it was a done deal.

"In the fifth year of my career, I do get to say I've had some pretty big names stand beside me in support. From Steve Rifkind to Andrea Martin, you know, Jay-Z to Questlove, Kanye West and now Alicia Keys, as I'm getting ready to tour with her. I can't take the credit for all of it just being talent. It's all of the hard work and the music that has gotten the attention and the respect of these people before they had even met me. It's definitely a great union. As an artist, all you can really hope for is the respect of your peers and people you admire in the industry."

Admiration from fans is also ever-present, as the public has responded positively to the eclectic brew of music on *The Bridge*, which, at times, mimes Motown melodies, yet sonically traverses everything from analog soul to lover's rock and contemporary R&B. Many are also pleasantly surprised by Fiona's connection to Canada.

"A lot of people think I'm from New York. I'm like, 'Actually, I'm Canadian and proud to be.' I'm really happy that I get to be part of the movement that continues to put Canada on the map. People are like 'Damn. You've got Kardinal Offishall, Drake. You had Deborah Cox, Tamia. You have Melanie Fiona now. Maybe there's something up there?' There is and there has been for a very long time."

That something has drawn widespread critical acclaim, leading to opportunities such as Fiona being the voice behind a recent Italian advertising campaign for Martini Rosato. *The Bridge* is also a testament to her cultural background and the varied musical paths she had already travelled before she recorded the album.

"I grew up in such a multicultural society in Canada; my eyes were exposed to so many different types of cultures, food and people that I've always felt that music shouldn't be for one type of person," she says. "I just said, 'I'm going to take a risk. I'm going to be that artist who is going to break all the rules and not put myself into a box and really try and make an album that is consistently varied and diverse.'

"That way, people understand it's not really about the instruments used. It's about the feel of the music more than anything. I don't really classify the music I listen to as black music or whatever. If I like a song because of the way it makes me feel, then that's what I'll buy or that's what I'll listen to. I just want people's minds to be open and understand more about why I did it that way and why the music sounds the way it does."

> ***"I grew up in such a multicultural society in Canada; my eyes were exposed to so many different types of cultures, food and people that I've always felt that music shouldn't be for one type of person."***

Leaving it open to interpretation led many tongues to wag about whether the topic of *Give It to Me Right*, the lead single from *The Bridge*, was as lascivious as it seemed. It's something of which Fiona is highly aware.

"Of course it's wordplay, and it can mean many different things," she says. "People always think it's about sex, all the time. Sure, definitely it could be. If you want to use it in that context, why not? But really, if you listen to the words, without the sexy beat and without the singing, if you just think about it, it's like everybody wants what they want, the way they want it — and they want it right. Like, if you got a bad meal you would send it back to the kitchen. If you were dissatisfied with something you would file a complaint. *Give It To Me Right* is kind of a motto: This is what I want and I don't want to have to settle for anything less.

"I think that people feel that way all the time in relationships as well. It kind of became this really cool women's anthem because it gave women that shake your head, shake your finger, no nonsense attitude. Like, 'I know what I want and I'm strong.' That was a beautiful thing for me for women to be empowered by that concept."

Being empowered is a constant theme that arises when speaking with Fiona. Her next single, *Ay Yo*, is also her favourite song from *The Bridge* and draws on this theme. She hopes it can serve as a rallying call for anyone facing difficult circumstances.

Soon, Fiona will be taking the next step in her career when she starts work on her second album and competes to win a Juno for R&B/Soul Recording of the Year. But her goals seem to extend beyond the music industry. Somehow, it's fitting for the singer, who saw taking part in a charity single recording as being more important and fulfilling than her Grammy nomination.

"It's been about the music and the music has gotten the attention of the people," Fiona says. "But now it's about the movement of what it means to be an empowered artist and young woman, and charitable events and things like that... it's time to give back." ■





# From political to *emotional*

**Erykah Badu's *New Amerykah, Part Two: Return of the Ankh* is a return to her melodic neo soul roots**

« BY LEROY GRAHAM »

THERE IS NO doubt that Erykah Badu is one of the strangest women in the music industry. In fact, our guess is that Lady Gaga has spent more than a few nights drawing inspiration from the swagger and style of the mama of neo soul. It's actually that unpredictable (and sometimes unintelligible) artistic inspiration, which makes each Badu album a work of art. Two years after the release of *New Amerykah, Part One: 4th World War*, which floated through geopolitics, race and other social issues, Badu reveals that *New Amerykah, Part Two: Return of the Ankh* will bring fans back to her melodic neo soul roots.

"I called it *Part Two: Return of the Ankh* because this album is the sister of the left side of my brain," Badu explains during a listening session in New York City. "*Part One* was the left side of my thoughts. It was more socially political and my thought process was more analytical. This time there wasn't anything to be concerned with. The album is more emotional and flowy and talks about feelings. It reminds me of the days of *Baduizm*. This is just about beats and rhymes in a cipher."

With production by 9th Wonder, James Poyser, Madlib and the late J Dilla, we're expecting *Return of the Ankh* to return Badu to the top of the charts. ■

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# The reinvention of Maiko Watson

**The former Sugar Jones singer has stripped away bubblegum pop for soulful sounds and control of her life**

« BY AMANDA ROBINSON »

HER JOURNEY LEFT her with a few bumps and bruises, but Maiko Watson says she now feels more comfortable in her own skin.

Armed with a unique fusion of acoustic soul, jazz and R&B, the singer-songwriter, producer and recent business owner is ready to once again make her mark in the music business, but in a much different way. The Winnipeg native is back in Toronto to promote her recently-released debut album, *Sweet Vibration*, which was put out by her own independent label, Labeame Records. "I was influenced a lot by jazz around the time I was writing this album and R&B and soul is kinda my roots in music," she says. "The album is a combination of those things, and just me being more mature now."

You might remember Watson from when she was in her early 20s — she was one of five members selected to be in the pop group Sugar Jones, which was formed in 1999 through the reality TV show *Popstars*.

In 2001, she married Canadian musician Remy Shand, moved back to Winnipeg with him, and left Sugar Jones. Watson spent the next few years touring and singing backup for Shand's band. They filed for divorce in 2006.

Looking back at her younger self, Watson says she knows she wasn't ready for marriage after being taken on a whirlwind ride to fame with Sugar Jones. "I got married really fast. It's like everything was happening all at once," she says. "You're not looking very far ahead. I know now that I didn't know who I was back then. I feel a lot more comfortable with who I am now and what I want."

Watson says this even though Sugar Jones' debut album went platinum and spawned two Top 10 singles on the Canadian charts. The group was even nominated for a Juno, performed at the Air Canada Centre and opened for acts like Destiny's Child. She admits leaving the group was a bit selfish. "I was more considering myself than members of the band," she says. "But, at the same time, we all have our lives and I'm still in touch with most of the girls."

Now an independent artist with an independent record label — far from the days of screaming fans, tour buses and industry parties — Watson describes her time with Sugar Jones as having given her an unrealistic view of the music industry. Watson now enjoys the daily grind because she says she has what she lacked while in Sugar Jones: a more soulful sound, creative control and, most importantly, the ability to determine her own success. "There's a lot of work on the business side of things. It's a lot of sending out packages, constantly contacting people and research. At the same time, I really enjoy it because you're making things happen for you."

After being on a roller-coaster ride for the last few years, Watson says she feels that this is the perfect time for her to re-emerge. She's developing her sound as an artist and, with changes in the industry — artists becoming famous as a result of social networking websites like MySpace or iTunes, for example — her grassroots label may have a huge chance to succeed.

Watson has also taken control over her personal life. She's currently single, enjoying her freedom and the ability to focus on making it to the top once again. ■

→ LOOK OUT FOR WATSON IN THE COMING MONTHS, PROMOTING HER ALBUM AND PLAYING AT FESTIVALS. YOU CAN CHECK HER MUSIC OUT AT MYSPACE.COM/MAIKOWATSONMUSIC





# Good girl gone... *good?*

On her latest album, Kellylee Evans questions the concept of 'good' and channels her alter ego

« BY LENNY STOUTE »

MOST ARTISTS WHO drop a well-received album tend to want to build on that by serving up more of the same. Kellylee Evans is confident that fans will follow her to another place.

The Scarborough-born singer came out of nowhere in 2007 with her debut album *fight or flight?*, a recording that went on to win the Best Female Artist award at the Canadian Smooth Jazz Awards. Evans recently released her follow-up, *The Good Girl*, and a listen reveals it's not at all a jazz recording. Instead, the album's 12 tracks are a blend of pop, urban, R&B and rock — all given a full working by Evans' rich and soulful tones. The songs leave listeners with an overall impression that Evans has grown into a strong, self-confident songstress.

"I fell into the jazz thing as a dare. I didn't think the material I was writing at the time was jazz, but it seemed like all the people around me were jazz players," she says. "One thing led to another. Somebody dared me to try out for this jazz combo needing a singer and I liked it. I was making music surrounded by jazz people. So when I thought to make a record, my jazz friends were the players I turned to and the album came out sounding jazz."

This time around, Evans decided to let the songs find their own voices, hoping that the freedom of her artistry would result in music both new and familiar to her audience. "The songs on the first album covered a lot of historical issues, things in my background I had to deal with. This one is me asserting myself, making my own decisions, dealing with things in the present. [It's also me] wrestling with love, lust and longings, and the realization that when a relationship changes, those feelings just don't go away. Thematically, *The Good Girl* is questioning the entire concept of 'good.' What is good? What good is it? Who decides what's good? Is what is good for society always good for the individual? You could say *The Good Girl* is partly a persona exploring ideas."

The dynamic nature of character and persona play an important role in Evans' music, and Evans says she sees the trend of female pop artists taking on alter egos as a sign that women have discovered an entirely new way to participate in and dominate the entertainment industry, without having to give up their femininity.

"We're in a period now in the music business when a lot of strong, capable women are coming to the fore. Singers like Beyoncé and others at the top share a similar stance in that they are strong, in charge and moving forward while, at the same time, maintaining their feminine vulnerability and need to be loved. It's like now, young women don't have to make a choice between those attitudes and I identify with that. So, yes, I think *The Good Girl* and Sasha Fierce would get along fine."

Aside from personal exploration, the album covers a lot of intricate ground, lyrically and musically. It, however, never loses the plot — a tribute to the deep emotional bonds generated by the process of making the album. "On tour we listen to a lot of the same music, sometimes on loop. Afterwards, when I hear those songs, I immediately remember where I was and what I was doing. Those songs sort of form the soundtrack of my life at that time. That's what I'd like people to take away from *The Good Girl*, a sense of where and how they were when they first heard the songs, that those tunes become part of the soundtrack of their lives." ■

→ THE GOOD GIRL IS AVAILABLE AT LOCAL MUSIC RETAILERS AND ITUNES.CA. FOR MORE INFORMATION ON KELLYLEE EVANS, VISIT KELLYLEEEVANS.COM

# The Strength of a Nation

## Thirteen years ago, bumping her head led TV personality Karlene Nation to discover a tumour that could have ended her life

« BY GEENA LEE »

AS A TRAILBLAZER, it's no surprise that Karlene Nation was chosen to be a torchbearer for the 2010 Paralympic Winter Games. Aside from being a trailblazer, Nation has also been a familiar face on Canadian TV screens for more than 16 years, serving as the diversity producer-reporter at CFTO and CTV. But, away from the spotlight, Nation is no stranger to struggle, having emigrated from Jamaica as a 17 year old single mom. On July 25, 1998, she faced a challenge that nearly took her life.

It began with an innocent news assignment. "I was sent to cover a hot air balloon festival in Milton. I was pretty excited and was like, 'This isn't work. This is fun!'" Eager to get in on the action, Nation decided to broadcast from one of the balloons. But, after two hours of being aloft, things began to go wrong.

"The navigator started looking a little nervous. We'd been blown way off course; then it got windy," Nation remembers. As they attempted to land, the balloon got out of control. "It dropped, bounced right back up, dropped again — just like an elastic band," she says. Desperately trying to keep her balance, Nation was violently tossed about in the basket. She eventually banged her head on an iron part of the balloon. Nation says the pain was unlike anything she had ever felt before. Eventually the rogue balloon was brought down, and Nation continued her report. "My talented cameraperson was shooting everything, so we had a great story that aired over and over again. [With comments like]: 'And here's Karlene, screaming her head off'. It was a fantastic story."

Two days after the incident, Nation began to experience a severe headache that wouldn't go away. By the fourth day Nation says the pain felt like "it was pushing my eyes out of their sockets." She soon began vomiting and passing out. Nation's mother, Veta Robinson, who is a nurse, whisked her to a hospital. Within about two hours of the initial pain, Nation says it went from bad to a lot worse. A CAT scan revealed a large mass at the base of her skull. It was a benign pituitary tumour. "The head trauma had activated the tumour and caused it to blow up massively in my head. It became engorged with blood and was on the verge of killing me," she says.

Nation was rushed to Toronto Western Hospital, which specializes in head trauma and brain tumours. By the time she emerged from the MRI machine, Nation had lost her eyesight. "My sister was helping me to get dressed and I was touching her face saying, 'Annie, I can't see you.' She freaked out and got the doctors." Nation was immediately wheeled into surgery and the tumour was removed. Although she eventually regained her eyesight, she was left with permanent double vision and no peripheral vision. She says she remembers begging the doctor to fix it and being told that it wasn't possible.

Disappointed with her new reality, but grateful to be alive, Nation came to terms with her situation and focused on recovery. But even that had a rocky start, as she contracted meningitis while still in hospital. To top it off, doctors then discovered a mysterious hole in her head, which earned Nation another trip to the operating room. "They took tissue from my leg and stuffed it in my head to close the hole," she says. "I always say I have foot in head problems."

Nation remained in hospital for three months. With the support of family, she began a 10-month-long recovery process. A pituitary tumour affects hormone production, so Nation began taking artificial replacements, but none of them worked well for her. Utilizing her journalistic skills, Nation researched alternative solutions and, by consulting with a series of doctors, found medication that worked in conjunction with naturopathic supplements.

Nation hopes her experience will serve as a warning to others. "Interestingly enough, most of us are walking around with brain tumours we don't know we have," she says. "The quickest way to find out is to have your eyes checked, and get a hormonal blood test." She also urges people to take headaches seriously, especially when they're accompanied by vomiting. "Don't ignore it. If I had acted sooner I don't think I would have lost as much sight" she says.

Almost 13 years after her ordeal, Nation is positive. She says she holds no bitterness toward her health issues. "People are going through terrible things, why not me? My whole life has been about overcoming obstacles and challenges. It's never been easy," she says. "The main lesson for me is that things will happen that you'll have no control over, and you have to find a way to overcome it."

Nation has triumphed and says she is feeling good about life. "I have a wonderful family, a wonderful work environment and wonderful friends," she says, before adding humourously, "All I need is a good husband, and you can print that." ■



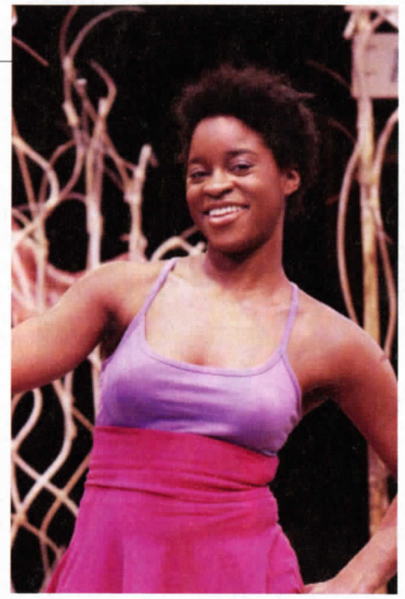
PHOTOGRAPHY **MIHO TAKAYA**



# In a class of her own

## *Jajube Mandiela, Degrassi's next breakout star*

« BY PAMELLA BAILEY »



CANADIAN ACTRESS Jajube Mandiela jokes that she's been attending rehearsals since she was three. That her mother is director and playwright ahdri zhina mandiela may have something to do with it. Now 21, Jajube plays gossipy cheerleader Chantay Black on the hit Canadian teen series *Degrassi High: The Next Generation*. When not onscreen, she's performing onstage to great reviews in shows like Theatre Direct Canada's *Binti's Journey*, and The Canadian Stage Company's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, all while pursuing film studies at the University of Toronto. Sway caught up with the talented performer while on a rehearsal break.

SWAY: **When did you know you wanted to be an actor?**
JAJUBE MANDIELA: I've been around the arts community most of my life. My mother put me into acting classes at Lorraine Kimsa Theatre when I was nine. At the time I was really into gymnastics, but I went along with it. Then I started doing on-camera classes and really enjoyed it. I guess I fell into it in a gradual way.

**Tell me more about Chantay Black.**
She started off as a somewhat mean cheerleader, then progressed into becoming a gossip blogger with a blog called *The Anti-Grapevine*. She always seems to be in the know. She's very fun to play, but it's also ironic because on the set I'm always the last to know what's going on — whether it's something with the cast members or changes to the script. I'm just the last to know!

**How did you feel when Chantay became a regular?**
I did a few episodes in season four. Afterwards, they kept bringing me back for a few lines here and there. Then, in season eight, my agent told me they wanted to use me more, but I didn't believe him. It's been fun and the cast is great. It's a whole new beginning.

**Why do you think the show is so popular with teens?**
I watched the original shows on Showcase and loved how real it was. They looked like normal kids; they were multicultural and they were relatable. Their problems, especially, were controversial, but real. Kids get pregnant, they get abortions and they get into drugs. Most shows wouldn't show that. It's also empowering because we can see kids figuring out their problems on their own instead of always going to adults.

**Your mother is quite an accomplished stage director and performer. You also perform onstage quite a bit. Did you feel that you had to follow in her footsteps or did you have room to do things differently?**
I have already carried on her legacy by pursuing the art that speaks to me passionately. I also feel that since I'm not a director first, I've already done it differently by doing television, for instance, but also kept in line with what she's given me.

**What other projects are you working on?**
I'm actually working as an assistant director on my mother's play, *who knew grannie: a dub aria*. It's my first time. I started dabbling in it last year through the rAiz'n ensemble that I am a part of through (not-for-profit arts company) b current. We did a directing workshop. I liked it and wanted to continue.

**What advice do you have for young would-be actors?**
Don't give up. Perseverance is a big part of success. Be determined, no matter how many times you hear "no," which you'll hear a lot. If you find that you love it, keep doing it. ■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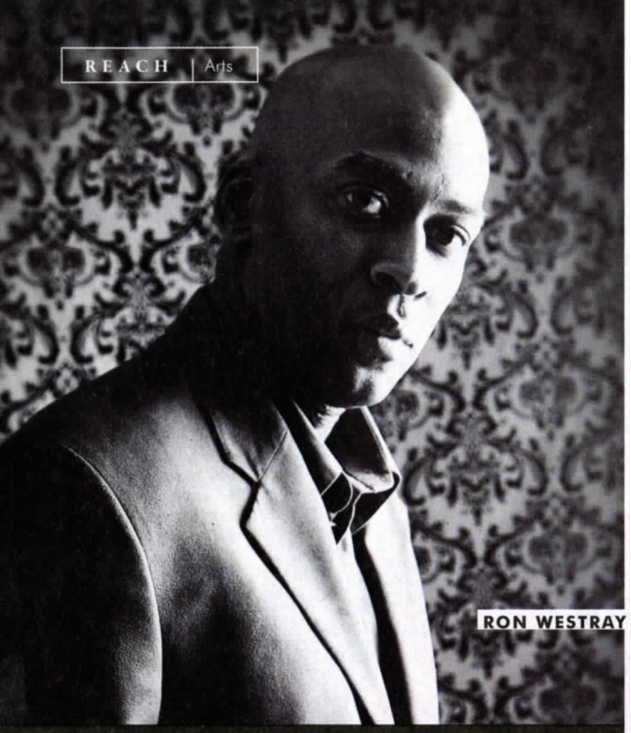


# Embracing artistic diversity

*A new mandate at the **Toronto Centre for the Arts** has it shaking up its programming*

«BY JASON ROBERTS »

ENTERTAINMENT SEEKERS in Toronto looking for a different kind of live theatre experience can expect to find it at the Toronto Centre for the Arts, home to the smash hit musical *Jersey Boys*. Beginning this year, a new mandate introduces an eclectic lineup of shows performed by members of what Darcy Hoover, the Centre's marketing co-ordinator, calls "the city's underserved arts community."

The mandate, developed by Hoover, was born out of an idea to program 28 straight days celebrating Black History Month. Instead, it became a yearlong commitment to feature new works from diverse artists. In addition to serving the interests of emerging artists, Hoover says other goals for the initiative include building new audiences and reaching out to music programs at high schools and colleges.

*Single Black Female, Members Only! An Erotic Poetry Show with Mr. Dwayne Morgan,* and Jay Martin's *Uptown Comedy Series* (featuring comedian Eddie Griffin) are just a few of the performances that have already been featured at the sprawling uptown theatre this year. So far, audience feedback to the new shows has been terrific, says Hoover. And the artists performing at the Centre, he adds, are having an immensely positive experience as well.

The Toronto Centre for the Arts will also host an innovative new live jazz series as part of the lineup. Under the direction of in-house music director and jazz musician-composer, Ron Westray, the series will run for two evenings (Thursday and Friday) every month from April through July, and then again in the fall. Westray will host the series and considers it to be a music laboratory of sorts, welcoming unknown artists to perform on an open mic and bringing together the interests of traditional jazz music lovers with equally devoted fans of hip-hop.

The two evenings of jazz performances will be very different from one another. Thursday nights, entitled *Westray's Swing House*, will focus more on playing "real jazz," as Westray puts it, and will feature well-known Toronto jazz names. Friday nights, entitled *Westray's Jazz Hop*, will be more dramatic, geared toward a younger crowd and focused on a fusion of "unknown possibilities between jazz and hip-hop," according to Westray. Performances on the latter night will also be interactive, with a talk show-style band, and concerned with picking out new talent from an array of rappers, turntablists and singers.

Thanks to a partnership with York University's CHRY community-based campus radio station, the Westray series will be heard over radio airwaves and online via webcast.

Hoover says he is completely ecstatic for what the new initiative at the Centre means for young, emerging black artists. Traditionally, up-and-coming performers were scattered across the city in much smaller, less welcoming venues. Now, with Hoover's new directive in place, he says a home base for these artists has been created, allowing them to perform in front of new audiences. ■

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PHOTOGRAPHY **MIHO TAKAYA**



# TWENTY YEARS OF DANCE AND INNOVATION

## Toronto's Ballet Creole dances its way to a milestone

« BY STEPHANIE POLLARD »

WHEN SPEAKING WITH Patrick Parson, founder and artistic director of Ballet Creole, the conversation almost instantly turns to images of dance studios, graceful bodies and the passion that his most cherished creation needs in order to keep growing. The tenacious spirit of African retention hidden in traditional dances from the Caribbean, blended with the grace of ballet, forms the cacophony of movement that inspired Parson to start his innovative dance group. Twenty years later, the colourful thread known as Ballet Creole is still sewing itself into the tapestry of dance in Canada.

When Parson came to Canada from Trinidad and Tobago to further his studies in dance, he realized that while there were black people in dance, there was no dance company that recognized African-Caribbean movement as an art. Thus, in August 1990, Ballet Creole was created. Since then, according to Parson, the dance company has taken "...our cultural dance form into a contemporary setting and put it on the main stage in Toronto as dancer's art. It has also put us, visually, within the contemporary world of dance."

In fact, because of Ballet Creole, the Canadian dance world has been introduced to another realm that is wonderfully different. *Dance International* magazine called the company "a unique amalgam of many dance languages," and the Scarborough Arts Council dubbed it "a vision of a new artistic tradition in Canada, created through the fusion of divergent dance and music styles."

Having started his own dance career competing in Better Village, an island-wide competition for the arts in Trinidad and Tobago, Parson says that black dance, especially, is inspired by a multitude of cultures. But, no matter where it originates, dance has one special aspect in common.

"All dance comes from tradition, even white dance," he says. "So, my thing is that we don't have a 'black dance' per se in the professional world of dance. We have blacks in dance and we draw from a lot of aesthetics depending on our cultural background.

"I am a Caribbean man. My black dance comes from the indigenous dances of the Caribbean that revolutionized and sustained the Caribbean people."

Ballet Creole actually thrives off of diversity, with its roots grounded in the traditions Parson mentions. To chip away at the wall that prevents diversity in mainstream dance, the school has, throughout the years, played host to choreographers and dancers from an array of countries, including Jamaica, Mexico, Brazil and the United States. Parson says that his dream has always been for people to equate Ballet Creole with The National Ballet of Canada. He hopes the diverse talent featured within the company will help it achieve this status. In the meantime, Parson plans to continue to build his audience and nurture similar passions of those who come through Ballet Creole's doors.

"The more people who come through the school and go out there, the more people are going to be doing things in the arts," he reasons. "Some fall by the wayside and do something else. But, the ones who continue are going to be spreading that aesthetic and that type of drive so blacks in dance will become more visible. As more people see dance can be a viable profession for Caribbean and black people, then there will be support to create a high profile [black] ballet company."

Until then, Ballet Creole will continue to embody three things: diversity, harmony and energy. ■

### THE EVOLUTION OF BALLET CREOLE

**1991:** Ballet Creole bursts on the dance scene, performing its first piece at the World of Music, Art and Dance festival in Toronto.

**1992:** Ballet Creole hosts its first dance season at the Winchester Street Theatre.

**1994:** The Company begins what will become an annual dance presentation at Harbourfront Centre in Toronto.

**2002:** *Soulful Messiah*, a piece set to a modern rendition of Handel's *Messiah*, is presented to rave reviews.

➜ BALLET CREOLE CONTINUES ITS REIGN AS CANADA'S PREMIER BLACK DANCE COLLECTIVE WITH SANKOFA, IN PRESENTATION FROM APRIL 15-17 AT THE FLECK DANCE THEATRE. FOR MORE INFORMATION ON BALLET CREOLE, VISIT BALLETCREOLE.ORG OR CALL 416-960-0350

# The art of self-discovery

«BY LEROY GRAHAM»

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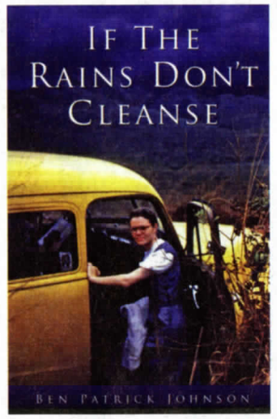


Issues of colonization, race, war and religion take centre stage in the Ben Patrick Johnson novel *If The Rains Don't Cleanse*. Set at the halfway point of the last century, the story follows the turbulent and often traumatic life of Christian missionary Eva Dunagan, as she struggles to reconcile her own views on justice with the stark realities of life in the Belgian Congo. After more than 14 years in Africa, Eva develops both a love for the land and people, all the while skirting the encroaching wave of revolution that will soon shake her focus, and faith. ■

**The Black Girl Next Door: A Memoir**
JENNIFER BASZILE
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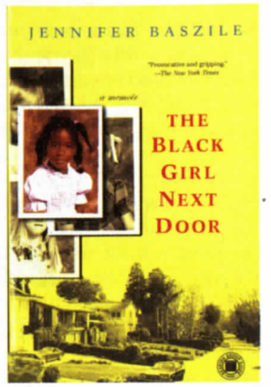


Author Jennifer Baszile grew up developing her sense of identity in the same post-segregation era that produced luminaries such as Oprah Winfrey and President Barack Obama. In her achingly honest memoir, *The Black Girl Next Door*, Baszile sheds light on the complexities of an American society clumsily attempting to make sense of shifting racial relations and identities. Her experiences serve as the backdrop for a wider discourse on being black in America.

After her parents move to an all-white California suburb, Baszile and her sisters find themselves the only black students at their school. Fending to forge a sense of identity that balances the middle-class lifestyle of shy smiles and pleasantries and the inescapable blackness, which singles the Baszile girls out at school dances, debutante balls, and in parking lots, the sisters find more than their share of success.

However, as the girls grow up and witness the increasing role that their race plays in shaping their experience — and the toll that limited opportunity, unspoken frustration and the burden of being the perfect black family takes on both their parents — a new sense of self and individuality slowly begins to take shape. ■

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# Tales of Other Tongues

An anthology of mixed-race women's experiences is seeking new voices

«BY ADEBE D.A.»

BEING BIRACIAL IN Canada is about crossing borders: some imaginary and some rigidly imposed. It is also about juggling hyphens and margins, and struggling to carve out a place in Canada's proclaimed multicultural landscape — a space that many might argue is largely make-believe, as we're led to think that it's better to evade than to create meaningful discussions about race and racial differences.

Working with a team of supporters, Canadian poet Andrea Thompson is attempting to carve out a new space for mixed-race populations by presenting critical questions and creative strategies for thinking about race through her anthology, *Other Tongues: Mixed-Race Women Speak Out*. The anthology, currently being compiled, focuses on creative pieces that engage, document and explore the experiences of being of mixed race by placing interracial analysis at the centre.

"When I was younger, I saw myself as existing in an in-between limbo sort of land," says Thompson. "But as I've gotten older, I've really begun to see being of mixed race as an identity unto itself. People of mixed race share a commonality of perspective and experience. This to me is the basis of that sense of belonging or identity."

Canada is part of the growing and changing interracial literary and cultural landscape of the Western Hemisphere. This shifting landscape is fundamentally a product of recent investigations by authors and artists into the largely buried history of miscegenation in this nation.

*Other Tongues* represents a collective effort to dismantle and detour hegemonic notions of race that serve to discount the existence of multiracial identities and histories. While many of these histories date back to the 19th century, it was not until the mid-1920s that the number of works on the mixed-race experience increased, and biracial artists were provided with a platform for critical and creative exchange. Since the years of praise that followed the publication of Carol Camper's acclaimed *Miscegenation Blues: Voices of Mixed Race Women* in 1994, there has been little written on the continued constraints surrounding mixed-race identification — and the possibility of seeing mixed race as an identity category of its own. Although picking apart the socially constructed elements of race will not end the effects of racism, Thompson says creativity can be a way to work through feelings of oppression.

"Being creative gives us a way to explore race and identity without having to be too dogmatic about it. A creative project doubling as a political program is precisely what *Other Tongues* hopes to be: a collection of poems, stories and other creative works that tell a different story about whose voice gets heard, by featuring voices that demand a readership that will listen with an open mind." ■

→ OTHER TONGUES WILL BE RELEASED IN FALL 2010 BY INANNA PUBLICATIONS, AND IS ACCEPTING SUBMISSIONS OF UNPUBLISHED WORK UNTIL APRIL 15, 2010. TO REQUEST FULL SUBMISSION GUIDELINES, EMAIL: OTHERTONGUES ANTHOLOGY@GMAIL.COM

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# Sway was there

## BLACK HISTORY FOREVER PHOTOGRAPHY MIHO TAKAYA

→ Hundreds of partiers came out to Sway's annual Black History bash at WideAwake Liberty Studios for a fundraiser to establish a scholarship fund for Haitian refugees. Mega music talents like Dan Hill, Kim Davis and Divine Brown came out in support. For more info on the Sway Scholarship Fund or to make a donation call the Haitian Consulate at 416-538-3282.

## ONE LOVE HAITI FUNDRAISER PHOTOGRAPHY ROY VIRTUE

→ Love filled the air as the community galvanized its effort through song and spoken-word to raise funds for the Haitian relief effort.

## MUSIC STILLS PHOTOGRAPHY JASON MORTLOCK

→ Many people gathered inside the walls of Harlem restaurant to see a selection of music portraits by photograher Alexis Finch.

## BLACK HISTORY BRUNCH PHOTOGRAPHY ROY VIRTUE

→ The Ontario Black History Society continued its legacy of success with its annual launch event

(L-R) ANDREW MILLER, DEBBIE FISCHER, MICHAELA NEALE (WIFE OF HAYDAIN NEALE), DARRYL BALLANTYNE (ARTIST) AND RON LOPATA (MEMBER OF GROUP JACKSOUL)

## MOUNT SINAI HOSPITAL BLACK HISTORY

→ Mount Sinai Hospital celebrated the life of the late Haydain Neale during a special Black History Month ceremony hosted by *Sway* writer Andrew Miller.

## NEW YEAR'S EVE GALA PHOTOGRAPHY ROY VIRTUE

→ The second annual gala event was a celebration to launch Black History Month and featured many of Toronto's finest young professionals, dignitaries and honorees.

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REAL RELATIONSHIPS

# Our expert Rachael-Lea Rickards

## has all the answers for those looking for love in all the right (and wrong) places

**DEAR RACHAEL-LEA,**
I recently started chatting with someone online. We seem to really click. We've talked several times over the phone and are set to meet for a coffee date. Thing is, I'm concerned that he won't like how I look. I'm about 15 pounds heavier than the picture I sent. What should I do?

*Signed,*
Big Girl in Like

DEAR BGIL,
I feel your pain. Many online daters are guilty of this. Putting out a true representation of youself is always the best way to go. Your photo shouldn't be from your 1989 graduation when Halle Berry had nothing on you, or the Dominican Republic trip from 2000 when you starved yourself for a month to fit into a bathing suit you never wore again. The fact is: He might like you just the way you are. Most, but not all, men like a little meat on the bones. However, if you show up with a little more fluff than in your photo, it's not going to be pretty. Honesty is key to any relationship. Come clean, girl. Send him an updated photo and save yourself the stress. Either that or find a power girdle, hold your breath and hope for the best! Good Luck!

DEAR RACHAEL-LEA,
I've been dating a woman for the past two years. She's caring, an amazing cook, and our intimacy is phenomenal. But we don't have much in common, and I don't think I love her. She wants to get married. Everyone around me thinks it's time, but I just can't marry someone I don't love.

*Signed,*
She Looks Good on Paper

DEAR SLGOP,
Do you want a life partner or a warm body to snuggle next to? Don't answer! End it! Clearly you enjoy torture. Two years? What are you doing? Listen, nobody likes to be the "dumper." It takes a great deal of courage to tell someone to "hit the showers," but be a man and do it. Don't waste her time or your own. By the way, take a good look at the people who are encouraging you to marry your lukewarm woman — misery loves company. Two years is way too long to stay in something "mediocre." If you wait another two years, you'll experience the wrath of a scorned woman. She might even have a *Waiting to Exhale* moment with your stuff. Trust me, you don't want to go there. Set her free. She'll hate you now, but she'll appreciate it later. Look on the bright side, I hear you can now buy Caribbean meals in the frozen food section now, stock up and move on! ■

→ GOT QUESTIONS? WRITE ADVICE@ALLTHINGSRACHAEL-LEA.COM OR FOR VIDEO BLOGS AND ADVICE VISIT WWW.ALLTHINGSRACHAEL-LEA.COM

PHOTOGRAPHY **MARC LOSTRACCO**



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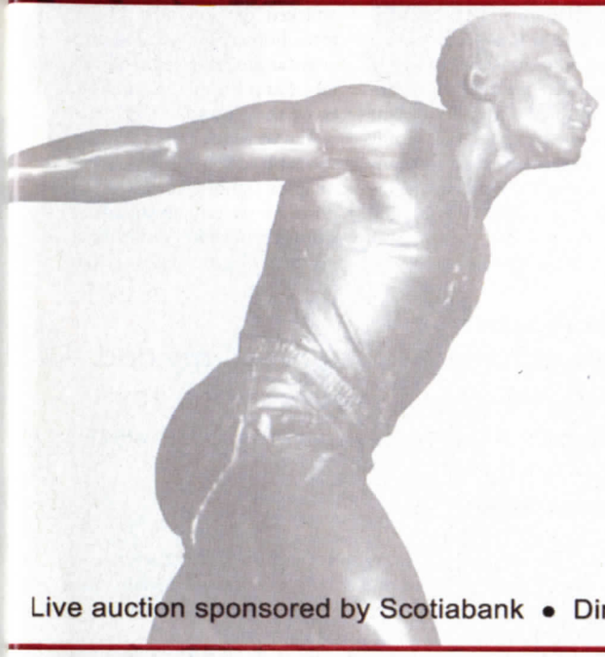

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# STANDING ON THE SHOULDERS OF GIANTS

« BY DAN HILL »

I LIKE A lot of space, both physical and personal. So when I pass someone on a sidewalk, I keep plenty of distance. One winter night last year, upon passing a black man in his thirties, I heard him say something that stopped me dead in my tracks: "Scared of getting mugged by a black man, eh? Afraid I'll rob you if you get too close?" Feeling as though I'd been slapped, I waited for him to catch up. When he stood only inches away, I looked him in the eyes, and said, "You have got to be kidding me." That was it. He shrugged. I glared. We went our separate ways.

Within minutes, I regretted not telling him about my father, who started the Ontario Human Rights Commission and was the first black ombudsman of the province. I also regretted not telling him about my brother, Lawrence Hill, who with one brave novel, *The Book of Negroes*, dispelled the condescending notion in publishing that black fiction does not sell.

The truth is, there have been many times when people have darted across the street to avoid *me*. Since I don't look white, people assume I must be dangerous or, if not dangerous, poor. Once, in L.A., a man mustered up the nerve to ask me to help push his stalled, decrepit car up a hill. When we got to the top, he glanced sympathetically at my beige skin, bushy hair and torn-up jeans and murmured, "Here's a couple bucks, man. Looks like you could use it." Not wanting to embarrass him, I pocketed the dough.

How did I get to such a surreal place — hopscotching the world, quietly banging out dozens of hit songs, while being regarded throughout my travels as an indigent person of unknown (read "threatening") racial origins? Well, I was raised in the '60s in Toronto's Don Mills neighbourhood, in what can be fairly described as a typical middle-class family — albeit one with a charismatic, black activist father and a brilliant, feisty Caucasian mother. Back then, children in black middle-class families like mine were raised with one overarching mantra: Achieve. Get the best marks and be the smartest kid. Because you will need to be better, tougher, more accomplished and street-savvy than the white kids if you want to succeed. In an ironic twist, my brother, Larry, earned such high marks in Grade 3 that his teachers were convinced he had a rare, psycho-emotional disorder: "Overachieving." ("Daggum," my dad thundered back, "you wouldn't say my boy was overachieving if he were blond and blue-eyed.")

Admittedly, the Hill family had a history of aiming rather high. My dad's dad, Daniel Hill II, had a PhD in theology. As assistant dean at the Howard University School of Religion, he brought people like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., with whom he corresponded regularly, to speak at his school. Because hotels refused to rent rooms to blacks at that time, my dad's family — like many other black families in America — put up touring entertainers and intellectuals, such as writer Langston Hughes and tenor Roland Hayes. The black sociologist W.E.B. DuBois might have considered such people among the "Talented Tenth"— comprising the top 10 per cent of black movers and shakers who made it their mission to educate, inspire and lead. The notion of the "Talented Tenth" galvanized my dad as a young man writing his PhD thesis, "Blacks in Toronto" (the paper is still a must-read in university sociology classes). Whenever his spirits flagged, he let the example of his family carry him through one more sentence, paragraph, or page, as he catalogued the triumphs of the blacks in his city in the mid-20th century.

Growing up in Toronto, I found plenty of black people, all equally driven, to inspire me too. They seemed to share two things with my siblings and me: powerful mentors and parents who would not tolerate mediocrity. Our neighbours, the Gandys, had a PhD-toting father and a brilliant son, Alan, who grew up to be a pediatrician and was the only kid I knew who could whip me in chess. Jazz great Molly Johnson was also a member of "the black driven class." Her family was accomplished in so many fields that, as a kid picnicking with them, the Gandyses, and the Richmonds (whose son, Billy, aced IQ tests on Friday night, just for fun), I always felt like a slacker. But all of us understood that the key to making our mark was basic: work, practise, study, repeat.

> Overachieving. ('Daggum,' my dad thundered back, 'you wouldn't say my boy was overachieving if he were blond and blue-eyed.'"

And, so, the tradition continues. Even today, my brothers and sisters are stepping up, as our parents did, to mentor our children positively, creatively. We well understand that the younger generations are watching, soaking up everything we do. Alas, our efforts to lead by example need to be publicized more by the media, not for the sake of our own individual careers, but to let the world know that anything is possible and that we are the gatekeepers to our future.

"Education is everything," Juno award-winning Haydain Neale once declared to me over dinner. While his statement resounded loudly with ideas of the "Talented Tenth," he was speaking of schooling his daughter, Yasmin. For, despite Haydain's superlative musical talent, when we talked we rarely discussed music. We spoke, instead, of our children, their challenges and triumphs, and our responsibility to be much more than recording artists. Haydain's understated power and eloquence, his utter selflessness, reminded me of my paternal grandfather.

"Tell your son, David, not to let racism break him," Haydain also advised, when I recounted how a gang of white thugs had attacked my son only a mile from home. "He can turn his anger at prejudice to his advantage. Let it fire up his ambition, prove those thugs wrong."

Yes, we have a choice. We can succumb to anger, letting other people's ignorance bring us down, or we can answer adversity with our gifts rather than our fists. For me, creativity has always been the best revenge.

Shortly after Haydain died of lung cancer, I was privileged to be part of a tribute concert held in his honour, at Toronto's Phoenix Theatre. As I shared the stage during the encore with other artists such as Divine Brown, k-os, Nelly Furtado and Keshia Chanté, I felt chills run through my body. I saw an audience of all ages, all colours, squeezed together as though part of the same Toronto tribe, singing and swaying and weeping along to jacksoul's *One Song*. The smiling sea of faces, mouthing Haydain's lyrics, conjured up his spirit, rocked me with love and hope and the power of possibility. I sent out a prayer of celebration then, to Haydain and to black leaders, past and present. Through their lives, their triumphs and sacrifices they move us to achieve, to love, and, as my grandfather used to preach, "to prop each other up from every leaning side." ■



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